

Greetings, thank you for the opportunity to be here with you today.

I stand here before you today to speak regarding the effects of witness intimidation and in loving memory of my son, Eric Hayes, who was gunned down at the bus stop on Thanksgiving eve, three days before testifying in trial.

Sometime ago District Attorney Lynn Abraham put out a call for people to stand up against criminal activity and speak out. It seemed in her campaign, the city would offer help to those witnesses who stood up against criminal activity. Unfortunately, her noble outcry to solicit witnesses willing to stand up for justice caused my son his life. I know my son did the right thing by offering to testify against criminals who need to be off the streets of Philadelphia, but he paid with his life because the City of Philadelphia has no process in place to support witnesses who do step up, speak out and do the right thing. The city solely depends on the state for help protecting much needed witnesses and the state can only offer temporary help which is minimal protection at best.

This is where my story begins. On November 13, 2005@ 2 a.m., my son heard and witnessed two people pouring gasoline around the front door of our home. He did not take the law into his own hands, instead we contacted the authorities and he pointed out the individuals to the police in our District. Although the police caught the suspects smelling like gasoline, there were prolonged court dates and hearings, bogging down the process which would lead to a speedy conviction. After being intimidated and threatened for 2 months for speaking out, we entered into witness the "relocation" program. (It was a year or more later that to my surprise, I learned that there is a distinct difference between witness protection and witness relocation.)

The state's witness relocation program offers shelter which during this timeframe the victims are to secure housing and safety within four months. This to me is where the problem begins. For a person who cannot afford to permanently relocate to safety in that period of time, they are left to fend for themselves. That is what happened to my family. When I realized that I could not afford to leave the city to save my son's life, I appealed to the City for help. My request simply put – please help me to get a subsidized housing voucher so that I could affordably and safely live outside of the city. When I appealed to the following agencies they had no process in place that could help: Mayor John Street office, Councilwoman Anna Verna, Councilwoman Janie Blackwell, Congressman Brady, Dwight Evans office and OESS. Instead, we were placed into hotels where thousands of dollars were spent, and then later placed into the transitional housing program. Meanwhile, my home that I struggled to purchase for my family was left vacant, because of the intimidation of criminals.

On November 22, 2006, two days before he was to testify, my Eric was gunned down in the very neighborhood where housing was provided by the transitional housing program. For the record, my Eric was not working or hanging in our old neighborhood during this time.

In conclusion, three years after losing my son to those he was trying to protect others from, I find myself a disabled single mother, struggling, renting a home that I cannot afford, while the home that I own and can afford I cannot return too with certainty that my family will be safe. If it had not been for my faith, my Bishop and church family who encourage me and my sons to stay on the right side of the

law and stay far away from the negativity, then my remaining two sons could have fallen victim to the retaliation mindset that sweeps across this city and I could have lost them as well. Instead, I chose to have faith and continue to stand up for justice knowing that one day we will have a home again and we will get justice for Eric.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my story.