



Allegheny County Council

County of Allegheny
436 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Phone (412) 350-6490
Fax (412) 350-6499

Legislation Text

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Title...

Proclamation honoring Dr. Jim Withers for devoting his time and energy to the homeless population of the Pittsburgh region through his program Operation Safety Net.

Body...

WHEREAS, Dr. Jim Withers, a full time employee of the Pittsburgh Mercy Health System, Assistant Clinical Professor of the University School of Medicine, and faculty of Mercy Hospital devotes his time and energy week after week to the homeless population of the Pittsburgh region through his program **Operation Safety Net**; and

WHEREAS, born in Hanover, Pennsylvania, Jim was raised making house calls alongside his father, a family practitioner, and after receiving his undergraduate degree at Haverford College, completed his own medical education at the University of Pittsburgh in 1984; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Withers' experiences in Central America and India with Dr. Jack Preger, founder of relief agency Calcutta Rescue, led him to embrace "street medicine," a worldwide movement predicated on providing medical care directly to those living and sleeping on the streets who are unable to reach, or who are actively denied, care through traditional methods; and

WHEREAS, in 1992, Dr. Withers and his colleague Mike Sallows, a former homeless person himself, began making nighttime street rounds in Pittsburgh, and under the auspices of the Pittsburgh Mercy Health System, Dr. Withers founded Operation Safety Net, the first full time, comprehensive medical service of its kind focused on providing care to the unsheltered homeless population of Pittsburgh; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Withers' life's work has been covered by local and national media, including Pittsburgh Magazine, NPR, CBS News, People Magazine, Dateline, Reader's Digest, The Huffington Post, various medical publications and several documentaries; and

WHEREAS, for over 20 years, Dr. Withers and Operation Safety Net have set out onto the streets, providing free medical care to about 20,000 individuals, helped more than 1,200 homeless people find a place to call their own, and helped countless more with access to health insurance and other social programs that are all too frequently denied to them;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Allegheny County Council does hereby honor and thank **Dr. Jim Withers** and the staff and volunteers of **Operation Safety Net** for connecting with and uplifting the most vulnerable in our society through patience, compassion and care.