

1 Introduced by Council Member Becton:
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4 **RESOLUTION 2021-723**

5 A RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER
6 AS FAMILY COURT AWARENESS MONTH; PROVIDING AN
7 EFFECTIVE DATE.
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9 **WHEREAS,** the concept for Family Court Awareness Month began after
10 Tina Swithin's arduous ten-year custody battle, with the intent to shine
11 a spotlight on the topic of family courts while honoring the young lives
12 traumatized or lost during separation or divorce legal procedures; and

13 **WHEREAS,** domestic violence does not necessarily stop when an
14 abusive relationship ends, there may be post-separation abuse and also
15 pain and suffering during the custody process within the family court
16 system. Ms. Swinthin's custody battle created years of distress, but
17 thankfully ended without tragedy. Other families have not been so
18 fortunate, with at least 806 children murdered by separating or divorcing
19 parents in the US since 2008; and

20 **WHEREAS,** all parties - Judges, Guardian ad Litem, Custody
21 Evaluators, Therapists and Attorneys - working in the family court system
22 should have proper training on domestic violence, childhood trauma and
23 post separation abuse in order to maximize children's safety; and

24 **WHEREAS,** the mission of Family Court Awareness Month is to educate
25 judges and other family court professionals on the empirical data and
26 research that is currently available. Such research is a critical
27 component to making decisions that are truly in the best interest of
28 children. This research includes The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)
29 Study (CDC-Kaiser Permanente), Saunder's Study (US Department of
30 Justice), The Meier Study: Child Custody Outcomes in Cases Involving
31 Abuse Allegations, and the Santa Clara Law Study (Confronting the

1 Challenge of High-Conflict Personality in Family Court); and

2 **WHEREAS**, recognizing November as Family Court Awareness Month is a
3 method to address these heartbreaking events that can destroy families,
4 in an effort to ensure children's rights to be safe and protected; now
5 therefore

6 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City of Jacksonville:

7 **Section 1.** The City of Jacksonville hereby recognizes
8 November as Family Court Awareness Month. Jacksonville City Council
9 encourages all parties involved in the family court system to take
10 whatever precautions are necessary to ensure children are safe and
11 protected during separation or divorce legal procedures.

12 **Section 2. Effective Date.** This Resolution shall become
13 effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective
14 without the Mayor's signature.

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16 Form Approved:

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18 /s/ Paige H. Johnston

19 Office of General Counsel

20 Legislation Prepared By: Colleen Hampsey, City Council Research

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