

JOHN F. WHITE, JR.

John F. White, Jr. has that most rewarding of life stories: a public career of caring and action that began at a very young age and continues with fervent dedication through the decades, benefitting thousands of people from all walks of life. Early on, he committed his life to social change and improving the lives of fellow Philadelphians. Those efforts expanded rapidly to include helping people throughout Pennsylvania, the Tri-State Region and the nation. When the Wall Street Journal needed expertise in Crisis Intervention and Mobil Crisis Management - they called John White, Jr. The Biden Administration's national Secretary for Health and Human Services, Xavier Becerra explained why he chose The Consortium to launch the new National 988 Suicide Lifeline, "The reason we are here in Philadelphia, it's not coincident, accident, we're here, John, because you all do great work." (LiveStream: <https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=GRiMCThUM6w> -59:20)

Educated in the Philadelphia public schools, where his musical talent won him a seat playing French horn in the prestigious All City Orchestra, John went on to become an accomplished horn player and was inducted into the Settlement Music School Hall of Fame.

John began his professional career as a community organizer at the Philadelphia Urban League while still in his early twenties. He was organizing students and became a leader on the frontlines of the battle to stop and solve the city's deadly gang warfare problems.

In 1976, he quarter-backed a ground-breaking political campaign and was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives from the 200th Legislative District. During his three-term tenure, he sponsored several key pieces of legislation, tackling a range of public policy concerns including education, juvenile justice, prison reform, social welfare and energy issues. White conducted statewide public hearings and was the prime sponsor of legislation to ban handguns and chart new gun control guidelines. As chairman of the sub-committee on Crime and Corrections of the Judiciary Committee, he led the effort to reform the juvenile justice system. His leadership also led to his appointment to the Appropriations Committee and Transportation Committee, where he was chairman of the sub-committee on Mass Transit.

Joining with the late Representative David P. Richardson, John conducted the first-ever public hearings held in the state prisons themselves, investigating prison conditions, health and safety issues. He was also elected Co-Chairman of the Philadelphia Delegation to the Pennsylvania House, by his fellow lawmakers.

In 1981, he was elected to the City Council of Philadelphia, representing the Ninth Councilmanic District. During his six years as councilman, he chaired the Council's Health and Human Services Committee, where he initiated studies and improvements to upgrade Philadelphia's Department of Human Services. His national research on hospital emergency room improvements paved the way for Philadelphia's initial three state-of-the-art medical trauma centers, the first of their kind, serving both the Philadelphia metro area along with surrounding suburban counties. He also increased foster care placements and established a comprehensive Emergency Utility Fund to assist disadvantaged Philadelphians with heating costs.

John also spearheaded increased awareness of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and sponsored legislation mandating special health warnings for pregnant women on the dangers of consuming alcohol at all establishments serving or selling alcoholic beverages throughout Philadelphia. White also conducted the first City Council hearings on HIV and AIDS at a time when both public and medical knowledge was very limited and national policy had not yet acknowledged the health and human crises they posed.

White's civic efforts are also held in high esteem for the libraries he helped build or whose doors he kept open during budget battles, increasing voter participation, investigations into the sinking homes of the City's Logan section, bringing federal relocation money to the cause. He also helped establish numerous town watch groups throughout Northwest Philadelphia, reducing crime and enhancing neighborhood walkability.

In 1987, Mr. White returned to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania when Governor Robert P. Casey appointed him Secretary of the Department of Public Welfare (DPW), the largest agency in Pennsylvania government at that time, with an \$8 billion operating budget and 29,000 employees. White was the first African-American to hold that position.

While Secretary, White was highly respected for his vision, diplomacy and peacemaking abilities across cultures, political aisles and philosophical divides. He was able to create fields of mutual interests and benefits to implement award-winning initiatives such as the "Penn Free" Comprehensive Education, Prevention and Drug Treatment Program. He introduced the 'One Church-One Child' program where 600 Pennsylvania foster care children found permanent homes. In addition, White's leadership of DPW fostered the development of several other nationally recognized programs, which created jobs for more than 200,000 welfare recipients, improved access to medical treatment for low income families and expanded health care services for children throughout the state of Pennsylvania.

Of particular note, Pennsylvania Governor Robert P. Casey and John pioneered the rise of the Community Based Health System in Pennsylvania, a milestone in mental health treatment history. John modernized the state-wide mental health system, closing notoriously outdated, over-sized hospitals and created the framework for the development of community-based, 'people-first' programs. By pulling the plug on the large, unsafe, warehouse-type mental institutions, they developed smaller, humane, efficient and more meaningful treatment centers in communities, as needed. Many of the programs John initiated at DPW are still flourishing today, continuing to yield benefits for hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians.

In 1991, White entered the private sector as a Vice President at the New York investment firm of Kidder Peabody in their California, Pennsylvania and New York City offices. He assisted with publicly-financed projects including building housing for the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympic village in Georgia, improvements to the Los Angeles transportation system and health care institutions around the country.

He left Kidder-Peabody after getting a call from the nation's capital to help solve a major set of problems in Philadelphia. Tapped by the Clinton Administration in 1993, John served a four-year term as the Executive Director of the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA). Prior to his arrival, the agency was described by housing experts as one of the most troubled housing authorities in the country. Scandal plagued and beleaguered, the Philadelphia Housing Authority was the fourth largest housing agency in the nation, serving 44,000 residents, managing 23,000 housing units, with a workforce of 2100 employees, including its own

Academy-trained police force. Its annual operating budget was \$113 million, with a yearly capital/modernization budget of \$80 million, in addition to an unprecedented \$500 million capital improvement campaign.

The media reported White was brought in to rescue the agency and he did.

He established health centers on the grounds of the public housing developments, by creating partnerships with local hospitals' nursing schools to provide care. White's programs were also responsible for reducing crime. He also initiated an employment and training program to empower resident's rights councils and encouraged contractors to include resident participation in the rebuilding activities at the developments.

Under his leadership, White guided PHA away from its image of corruption and 'patronage haven,' into a revitalized agency, with compelling improvements, new construction and more modernization activity than any other public housing authority in the United States at that time, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The Philadelphia Inquirer reviewed White's performance writing, "Political leaders must forge a consensus that PHA should be allowed to carry out its primary mission – decent, safe housing for poor citizens. That was John White's focus, and it worked." His legacy included a tough new tenant lease that held PHA and its tenants accountable for the state of their housing; an historic implosion of the Raymond Rosen and Schuylkill Falls high rise towers, making way for modern housing structures, construction of commercial retail space, all of which resulted in improved quality of life and the removal of PHA from the federal list of "troubled" housing authorities by the federal office of Housing and Urban Development. All of which was made possible by White's initiatives to improve PHA relationships with its residents and giving them a genuine voice in PHA's new direction.

White's political outreach extended across the country in both 1984 and 1988 when he was a member of the Policy Committee of the Democratic National Committee (DNC). He worked to develop strategies to guide the DNC presidential selection process and chart new directions promoting multicultural inclusion and diversity.

His dedication to the City of Philadelphia and its most vulnerable citizens, is ongoing. As President and Chief Executive Officer of The Consortium, an award-winning comprehensive community behavioral health agency, serving more than fifteen thousand people annually, with five locations in West and Southwest Philadelphia, since 1967. The Consortium provides an array of behavioral health and disabilities programs including: Addiction Services, Behavioral Health Services for Children, Adults and Families and Intellectual Disabilities Support Services, to people across the City of Philadelphia. John's expertise has been sought after by international symposiums, university and governmental seminars on behavioral health and management innovation. When Wall Street Journal reporters needed expertise on Mobil Crisis Management, Mental Health and Community action - they called John White, Jr. The article was published October 29, 2020:

[<https://consortiuminc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Wall-St.Journal-JW-10-28-20.pdf>]

His long-range vision and leadership roles continue with The Consortium's front-line-status in the fight against the opioid crisis and providing essential services to the community from the streets, to the homes and medical facilities.

Throughout his career, John White, Jr. has consistently taken on tough assignments and brought about major improvements through his advocacy, innovative solutions and his trademark diplomacy and compassion. His lifelong commitment to helping those around him continues apace with his spirited efforts improving the health and well-being of his community.

Mr. White attended West Chester University, the Fels Institute of Government of the University of Pennsylvania and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He is the father of three sons and lives in the Overbrook Farms section of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

