

# City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia  
Office of the Chief Clerk  
Room 402, City Hall  
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 260182)

## RESOLUTION

Honoring and recognizing the life and legacy of Henrietta Lacks during Women's History Month and further commending the Lacks family for their advocacy in reaching historic settlements with pharmaceutical companies and helping to advance national conversations about medical ethics, racial equity, and patients' rights.

WHEREAS, Throughout Women's History Month, we celebrate and uplift the achievements, resilience, and transformative contributions of women whose courage and sacrifice have shaped the course of history; and

WHEREAS, Henrietta Lacks was a devoted mother of five whose cervical cancer cells were taken and used without her consent in 1951 at Johns Hopkins Hospital during treatment for aggressive cervical cancer; and

WHEREAS, The cells taken from Henrietta Lacks became known as the HeLa cell line and was the first immortalized human cells capable of continuous growth in laboratory conditions, revolutionizing biomedical research and becoming one of the most important tools in modern medicine; and

WHEREAS, HeLa cells have contributed to innumerable scientific breakthroughs, including the development of the polio vaccine, advancements in cancer and HIV research, genetic mapping, fertility treatments, and research essential to the development of COVID-19 vaccines that have saved millions of lives worldwide; and

WHEREAS, Despite the global and multibillion-dollar industries that grew from research using HeLa cells, Henrietta Lacks and her family were neither informed nor compensated for decades, highlighting longstanding inequities in medical research and the urgent need for ethical reform and informed consent; and

WHEREAS, The Estate of Henrietta Lacks reached an undisclosed settlement with Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc. to resolve claims that the company commercialized HeLa cells long after their origins were widely known; and

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WHEREAS, The Estate also reached a confidential settlement with Novartis, resolving litigation alleging that the pharmaceutical giant unjustly profited from the HeLa cell line cultivated from cells taken without consent; and

WHEREAS, These settlements represent meaningful steps toward justice, dignity, and acknowledgment for Henrietta Lacks and her family, whose advocacy has advanced national conversations about medical ethics, racial equity, and patients' rights; now, therefore be it,

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby honors and recognizes the life and legacy of Henrietta Lacks during Women's History Month as a pioneering contributor to modern medicine whose unintentional gift has saved and improved countless lives.

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*RESOLUTION NO. 260182 continued*

CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the fifth day of March, 2026.

Kenyatta Johnson  
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Elizabeth McCollum  
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Bass for Council President Johnson

Sponsored by: Council President Johnson, Councilmembers Bass, Ahmad, Brooks, Driscoll, Gauthier, Gilmore Richardson, Harrity, Jones, Landau, Lozada, O'Neill, O'Rourke, Phillips, Squilla and Young