

City of Philadelphia



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

(Resolution No. 240163)

RESOLUTION

Honoring and recognizing Katalin Karikó, PhD and Drew Weissman, MD PhD for winning the 2023 Nobel Prize in Medicine.

WHEREAS, Dr. Katalin Karikó is a senior vice president at BioNTech and an adjunct professor of Neurosurgery at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine. Dr. Karikó received her bachelor's degree in biology in 1978 and her doctorate in biochemistry in 1982 from the University of Szeged in her native Hungary. She was working at the Biological Research Center of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Szeged before immigrating to the United States in 1985; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Drew Weissman is the Roberts Family Professor in Vaccine Research at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine. Before joining Penn in 1997, Dr. Weissman was a fellow at the National Institutes of Health studying HIV in the lab of Dr. Anthony Fauci. Dr. Weissman received his bachelor's degree and master's degree from Brandeis University. Dr. Weissman earned his MD and PhD from Boston University and completed his residency at Beth Israel Hospital; and

WHEREAS, After a chance meeting in the late 1990s, while photocopying research papers, Dr. Karikó and Dr. Weissman began investigating mRNA as a potential therapeutic. In 2005, they published a key discovery: mRNA could be altered and delivered effectively into the body to activate the body's protective immune system; and

WHEREAS, mRNA-based vaccines elicited a robust immune response, including high levels of antibodies that attack a specific infectious disease that has not previously been encountered. Unlike other vaccines, a live or attenuated virus is not injected or required at any point; and

WHEREAS, When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the true value of the pair's lab work was revealed in the timeliest of ways, as companies worked to quickly develop and deploy vaccines to protect people from the virus; and

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WHEREAS, Both Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna utilized Dr. Karikó and Dr. Weissman's technology to build highly effective vaccines that protected recipients from severe illness and death due to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, In the United States alone, more than 655 million total doses of SARS-CoV-2 mRNA vaccines have been administered since they became available in December 2020; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Karikó and Dr. Weissman continue to work on new therapeutic applications of mRNA; and

WHEREAS, On October 2nd, 2023, Dr. Karikó and Dr. Weissman received the Nobel Prize in Medicine from the Nobel Assembly in Solna, Sweden. They are the 28th and 29th Nobel laureates with ties to the University of Pennsylvania, including nine who won the Nobel Prize in Medicine; and

WHEREAS, Not only did Dr. Karikó and Dr. Weissman's groundbreaking research save countless lives, it also showed the entire world the prowess and importance of Philadelphia's burgeoning life sciences industry; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby honors and recognizes Katalin Karikó, PhD and Drew Weissman, MD PhD for winning the 2023 Nobel Prize in Medicine.

FURTHER RESOLVED, Engrossed copies of this resolution be presented to Katalin Karikó, PhD and Drew Weissman, MD PhD as a token of this body's respect and appreciation.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the seventh day of March, 2024.

Kenyatta Johnson
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Elizabeth McCollum
INTERIM CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Gauthier

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Gauthier, Landau, O'Neill, Driscoll, Gilmore
Richardson, Squilla, Thomas, Brooks, O'Rourke and Ahmad