



# City of Philadelphia

City Council  
Chief Clerk's Office  
402 City Hall  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

## RESOLUTION NO. 220586

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**Introduced June 9, 2022**

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**Councilmember Gym**

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## RESOLUTION

Honoring and recognizing Carol Tracy, Esq. for her profound achievements advancing the legal status of women and families through pathbreaking litigation and advocacy, as well as her transformational leadership in the movement for women's rights in Philadelphia and across the nation.

WHEREAS, Carol Tracy, Esq. is a fierce and accomplished advocate and a local and national leader in the areas of reproductive rights, violence against women, economic security, social justice, child welfare, family court reform, and women's rights and has served since 1990 as the Executive Director of the Women's Law Project, a Philadelphia-based public interest law center that focuses on advancing the legal status of women; and

WHEREAS, Tracy has been a longtime resident of Philadelphia, obtaining a history degree at the University of Pennsylvania and a Juris Doctorate from Temple University's Beasley School of Law before spending her career fighting for a wide range of women's and civil rights in her city and beyond; and

WHEREAS, Tracy's fearless legal advocacy helped to remove barriers to treatment for pregnant women with addictions. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, she successfully challenged the widespread institutional policies of hospitals, drug detox units, and treatment centers that categorically excluded pregnant women. In addition to opening the doors of traditional treatment facilities to women, Tracy supported the emergence of gender-sensitive, trauma-informed treatment modalities for pregnant and parenting women; and

WHEREAS, In more than a dozen states, Tracy and her colleagues filed legal briefs challenging the inappropriate application of criminal child endangerment statutes to pregnant women with untreated addictions, showing the policies to be detrimental to public health and harmful to a pregnant women's dignity, autonomy, and need for treatment; and

WHEREAS, Under Tracy's leadership, the Women's Law Project served as counsel or co-counsel in numerous reproductive rights lawsuits, including the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case

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*Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, preserving the constitutional right to legal abortion for millions across the nation; and

WHEREAS, Tracy has helped to lead a vigorous defense as abortion and reproductive rights increasingly come under attack, guiding clinics through complex and burdensome sets of regulations designed to force them to close their doors. Under Tracy's leadership the Women's Law Project served as counsel for ten abortion providers in a 2016 amicus curiae brief to the U.S. Supreme Court which contributed to the Supreme Court striking down a Texas law subjecting clinics to admitting privileges and ambulatory surgical regulations; and

WHEREAS, Asserting the rights of the most vulnerable women to appropriate and timely reproductive health care, lead by Tracy, the Women's Law Project served as co-counsel in a civil rights lawsuit by a former prisoner who was shackled while giving birth to her baby en route to a hospital; and

WHEREAS, Beginning in 1999, Tracy helped to lead a transformative reform effort spurred by the decades-long failure of the Philadelphia Police Department to investigate sex crimes. Tracy provided substantial input on the Police Department's sexual assault coding manual, protocols, training, and supervision, as well as an innovative yearly case review of all unfounded rape cases and a random cross-section of all open sex crime and child abuse cases. This collaborative model – which under Tracy's leadership has continued to this day – is known nationally as the “Philadelphia Model”; and

WHEREAS, Tracy's work in Philadelphia revealed weaknesses in the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program's definition of rape and data collection on sex crimes. She initiated a successful campaign to expand the FBI's definition of rape to eliminate sex stereotypes and reflect contemporary standards; and

WHEREAS, In 2006, Tracy was appointed by Mayor Street as co-chair of Philadelphia's newly created Domestic Violence Task Force, which achieved significant improvements in the City's response to domestic violence and brought millions of federal dollars to Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Tracy's commitment to healing domestic violence involved her in a decades-long struggle to reform Philadelphia's Family Court, numerous collaborations to change practices in Philadelphia relating to domestic violence, and a leadership role in successive oversight bodies for Philadelphia's child welfare system. With the Support Center for Child Advocates, Tracy and her staff co-authored a domestic violence benchbook for family court judges entitled, *Deciding Child Custody When There is Domestic Violence: A Benchbook for Pennsylvania Courts*, published in 2005 and updated in 2013. Tracy co-authored the eye-opening exposé, *Justice in the Domestic Relations Division of Philadelphia Family Court: A Report to the Community*, which called for sweeping reforms, including a new unified Family Court facility. Tracy was a leading voice in the creation of Philadelphia's new Family Courthouse, which opened in late 2014. Tracy has co-led for many years the Domestic Violence Law Enforcement Committee, which is a unique collaboration of advocate organizations, the Police Department, the Probation

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Department, and the District Attorney's office; through this work, the group has achieved many positive changes in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, As co-founder and longtime Board Member of Women Against Abuse, Tracy was honored in 2014 for her work on domestic violence spanning 40 years, when Women Against Abuse named its new shelter, "Carol's Place," in her honor; and

WHEREAS, As Executive Director of Women's Law Project, Tracy has consistently targeted the organization's resources to aid the most disenfranchised and vulnerable women. Her creativity and vision have brought together coalitions such as the Coalition for the Welfare of Women and Children that have amassed an impressive record of legal and legislative victories including significantly increasing child support for low-income families, eliminating the durational residency requirement for TANF recipients, passing state legislation opting Pennsylvania out of the lifetime ban on cash assistance and SNAP benefits for women in recovery from addiction, and eliminating welfare program requirements that unfairly penalize or endanger domestic violence survivors; and

WHEREAS, In 2015, when Pennsylvania expanded its Medicaid program, Women's Law Project partnered with Community Legal Services to file a federal class-action lawsuit claiming that the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services unlawfully delayed the enrollment of tens of thousands of Pennsylvania women into comprehensive Medicaid coverage for which they were qualified. The situation was resolved, and tens of thousands of women obtained health insurance thanks in part to Tracy's resolute advocacy; and

WHEREAS, Throughout her career, Tracy has won important victories in civil rights and women's rights that have affected the lives of millions of people, both in Philadelphia and across the nation. Through her tireless work Tracy has made meaningful and significant changes to local and national policy in vital areas, such as reproductive rights, violence against women, child welfare, and economic security. For decades, Tracy has long been an important leader of the women's rights movement and has inspired countless lawyers and advocates to follow in her footsteps. We have all been impacted by Tracy's work and are incredibly grateful for her skill, creativity, dedication, and passion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Honors and recognizes Carol Tracy, Esq. for her profound achievements advancing the legal status of women and families through pathbreaking litigation and advocacy, as well as her transformational leadership in the movement for women's rights in Philadelphia and across the nation.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Carol Tracy, Esq., further evidencing the sincere respect and admiration of this legislative body.

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