



City of Philadelphia

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

RESOLUTION NO. 210793

Introduced September 30, 2021

Councilmember Brooks

RESOLUTION

Recognizing and honoring the contributions of Dorothy Bolden to the National Domestic Workers Alliance, labor organizing, and advocacy for workers' rights; and further proclaiming October 13th as "Dorothy Bolden Day" in the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Dorothy Bolden was born on October 13, 1924 in Atlanta, Georgia and she began working as a domestic worker when she was just 9 years old; and

WHEREAS, Congress passed the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) in the wake of the Great Depression, which provided monumental worker protections that created the humane labor conditions that exist in most other jobs. Although Dorothy was a teenager working as a domestic worker at the time, she would not benefit from the newly enacted legislative protections because domestic workers were purposefully excluded from the legislation; and

WHEREAS, Many understood this exclusion to be a race-neutral proxy that continued deregulation of the industry, creating a disparity between the exploitation and vulnerability of domestic workers and industries where workers were predominantly white. Despite the racist history of this exclusion, the laws remain unaltered to this day; and

WHEREAS, Although the exclusion from the NLRA and FLSA denied domestic workers federally-protected labor rights like the right to strike or collectively bargain, Dorothy Bolden rode every bus line in Atlanta to speak to hundreds of house cleaners and caregivers, organized 30,000 domestic workers to fight for better working conditions, and is considered the mother of the domestic worker movement; and

WHEREAS, As a Black woman in the height of the Civil Rights Movement, she faced racism and sexism on the job and in her life, including being arrested for refusing to work off the clock; and

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WHEREAS, Dorothy Bolden is a labor and civil rights hero who was proud of her role as a domestic worker and often spoke about the importance of her labor in the workforce; her foundational organizing and leadership for domestic workers is incomparable; and

WHEREAS; In the footsteps of Dorothy Bolden, Philadelphia house cleaners, caregivers, and nannies fought and won landmark labor protections via the Philadelphia Domestic Workers Bill of Rights in 2019; and

WHEREAS, There are more than 16,000 domestic workers in the City of Philadelphia, the vast majority of whom are women, primarily Black people and people of color, undocumented individuals, and other vulnerable populations that have been invisibilized and devalued, and work for very low pay; and

WHEREAS, In caring for homes and loved ones, domestic workers do the work that makes all other work possible and are the backbone of our economy; and

WHEREAS, Despite improvements in the law, Philadelphia domestic workers face racism, sexism, sexual violence, and poverty wages, as did Dorothy Bolden; and

WHEREAS, Domestic workers are organizing to make their rights in the law a reality on the job through the National Domestic Workers Alliance and its We Dream in Black program; and

WHEREAS, There is a rich history of domestic workers like Dorothy Bolden organizing and fighting for better working conditions, respect and dignity. To honor this sacred work, Philadelphia domestic workers deserve the visibility and recognition that Dorothy Bolden Day gives; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby recognizes and honors the contributions of Dorothy Bolden to the National Domestic Workers Alliance, labor organizing, and advocacy for workers' rights; and further proclaims October 13th as "Dorothy Bolden Day" in the City of Philadelphia.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the National Domestic Workers Alliance and its We Dream in Black Program as evidence of the sincere respect and admiration of this legislative body.