

Legislation Text

File #: 220177, **Version:** 0

Honoring the life, work, and accomplishments of Jacqueline “Jackie” Wiggins, whose dedication to serving, teaching, and advocating for marginalized populations has immeasurably strengthened Black communities and the City of Philadelphia as a whole.

WHEREAS, Jacqueline Wiggins was born on March 22, 1955, in Portsmouth, Virginia. From a young age, Jacqueline fostered a passion for teaching, stemming from her admiration for her 7th grade teacher, a nun at her Catholic school. When she was in the 7th grade, Jacqueline’s school burned down, so she and her classmates were forced to travel to receive their schooling. While many of the students were not fond of the situation, Jacqueline found their traveling to be like an adventure. Moreover, it gave her time to get to know her teacher and listen to her stories, which she found very interesting; and

WHEREAS, Chasing her aspirations, Jacqueline graduated from Pennsylvania State University in 1972 with a bachelor's degree in secondary education. Soon after graduating, Ms. Wiggins began working as a substitute teacher, and in 1973, she finally achieved her goal of becoming a full-time teacher. She worked at a Black Catholic concept school located in Harlem, New York until 1975, when she moved to Philadelphia to teach; and

WHEREAS, While working in Philadelphia, Ms. Wiggins was heavily involved in volunteer work for local non-profits giving back to the community. One day in 1979, Jacqueline was devastated to find that she had been laid off from her school. Undeterred, she leveraged her talent for writing and passion for serving her community to seek work in the non-profit sector, and found a job working for an anti-poverty agency in Springfield, Massachusetts. While writing proposals for this agency, Jacqueline expanded her skills and expertise in serving marginalized communities; and

WHEREAS, Fueled by her passion for people, Ms. Wiggins decided to continue her education in order to better serve the same communities she was already tirelessly dedicating her life to. In 1984, she graduated from the University of Massachusetts with a masters in Educational Administration; and

WHEREAS, Following her graduation, Jacqueline began to build a vibrant and diverse career filled with many prestigious positions. In the 1980s, Ms. Wiggins worked as the Assistant to the Vice President for University Relations at Florida A&M University and then as the Director of Development/Annual Giving for Bennett College, and finally as Pennsylvania State University’s Graduate Program Representative; and

WHEREAS, It was not until 1991 that Jacqueline found her way back to Philadelphia to assume her position as the Director of Public Relations for Prime Incorporated. She worked here until 1994, when she returned to teaching as an adjunct English professor at the Community College of Philadelphia, where she remains working to this day; and

WHEREAS, While in Philadelphia, Ms. Wiggins continued to immerse herself in the communities she loved, all while working full-time. In the 1990s, she served as the Associate Director for the Afro-American Historical & Cultural Museum-now known as the African American Museum in Philadelphia (AAMP)-then managed the Heritage Tourism Program in Pennsylvania for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and

later worked as the Site Administrator for the Johnson House Historic Site; and

WHEREAS, A project that has called her heart to serve since 1994, and continues to do so, is Jacqueline's role as a Resource Development Specialist for the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation, where she has developed and overseen a tour that focuses on the Underground Railroad in the Center City area; and

WHEREAS, While doing all of this, Ms. Wiggins also devoted countless years to grade school service. From the 1970s to the 2010s, Ms. Wiggins worked intermittently for the School District of Philadelphia and the Germantown Settlement Charter School in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Jacqueline has also achieved a number of notable civic accomplishments in service to her North Philadelphia neighborhood. As an activist for Stadium Stompers, she helped to prevent further encroachment of a football stadium by Temple University into North Central Philadelphia. In 2001, she successfully created an enrichment program called the Underground Railroad Camps for Children, Youths, and Families, which focused on recognizing stories that tended to be looked over, yet posed immense significance in the story of freedom in our society. In 2008, her camp became a member of the National Park Service, and in 2009 Ms. Wiggins opened her tourism business, Wiggins Tours and More. On top of this, Jacqueline served two terms as a Democratic Committeeperson in North Central Philadelphia's 32nd Ward; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Wiggins has also served as a board member of the Friends of the Free Library and is a current member of the Amos Playground Advisory Council. In 2020, she noticed that the Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission (PHMC) was lacking a Black board member, and she decided to fix that. Jacqueline became a member of the PHMC board later that year; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Wiggins believes that all people are fully deserving of dignity and equitable access to the resources that our country can offer, and the way she has lived her life makes this very clear. Her immense impact on our community is difficult to fully measure, given the many lives that she has touched. Her involvement in advocacy, education, creative projects, and community enrichment has not only empowered her North Philadelphia community, but has made a widespread positive change across our City; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby honor the life, work, and accomplishments of Jacqueline "Jackie" Wiggins, whose dedication to serving, teaching, and advocating for marginalized populations has immeasurably strengthened Black communities and the City of Philadelphia as a whole.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Jacqueline Wiggins as an expression of the sincere respect and awe of this legislative body.