

Legislation Text

File #: 220396-A, **Version:** 1

Honoring the life, work, and accomplishments of Shakeda Gaines, whose years of service as President of the Philadelphia Home and School Council has immeasurably shaped parent and family engagement in public schools, set a precedent for how to incorporate social justice values into positions of leadership, and established a clear expectation for how public schools should educate, inspire, and empower students and families in Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Shakeda Gaines was born on July 2, 1979, in North Philadelphia. Ms. Gaines overcame significant odds to obtain her G.E.D., and attend community college, including becoming homeless at the age of 14, and she attributes much of her education to learning that took place primarily outside of traditional, institutional settings. Faced with such extreme adversity, she was nonetheless determined to continue to mature and grow; and

WHEREAS, From a young age, Gaines knew that she wanted to help children and families so that other young families did not have to go through the challenges she faced. In January of 2012 she was approached by a parent ombudsman from Finletter Elementary, who explained how the Home and School Council were the adults that would hand out food to students in the cafeteria. She remembered her fond memories of this kindness during her own childhood and decided to become a part of this organization; and

WHEREAS, After learning about the Finletter Home and School Association, Gaines immediately joined as their secretary, but would soon confront a new challenge. Shortly after joining the organization, the majority of its members quit, and she was left alone without a plan. After reaching out to the Philadelphia Home and School Council to seek counsel, they told her that they could not do anything about the situation. They did, however, raise one important point-that even though everyone had left, Shakeda still remained, and that was enough. If the Finletter Home and School Association were to survive, Shakeda would need to step up and take on the leadership role the organization needed; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Gaines went straight to work to help the Home and School Association survive. Through her dedication, she was able to fundraise about \$20,000 for the group. In June of 2012, she became a Philadelphia Home and School Council Board Representative in training. Later in November of 2012, she was approached to join the Home and School Council board as a member at-large, a position that she accepted. Ms. Gaines continued to lead the organization with vision and determination, establishing herself as a known and trusted community leader. Two of her most notable accomplishments were educating parents about how to opt out of standardized testing and working with advocates to establish local control to the Philadelphia Board of Education after years of state-appointed representatives sitting on the School Reform Commission; and

WHEREAS, Following years of tireless advocacy for the Philadelphia Home and School Board and the families they served, Shakeda was elected as the President of the Philadelphia Home and School Council in 2017. In this new role, Ms. Gaines only worked harder to reform the way schools serve families and their children; and

WHEREAS, Today, Ms. Gaines continues to fight for increasing the decision-making power and autonomy of

Philadelphia families when it comes to their children's education. She believes that every child should feel safe and confident when in school, and that schools must bridge the gap between the classroom and the homes of their students. In recognizing the immense potential schools have not only to teach future generations, but to involve and support families outside the classroom, Shakeda has established herself as a fierce advocate for education justice and equity; and

WHEREAS, Shakeda believes that the future of the Philadelphia Home and School Council is to help build a school system that allows students to explore their potential while granting them the support and resources they need to grow, learn, and develop. She holds that no child should ever have to worry about where their next meal will come from, what will happen to them when they leave school, or if they are enough to make it in this world. She maintains that every person is unique and has something to offer, and she resolves to work with Philadelphia schools so that they can empower Philadelphia communities in this way; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby honor the life, work, and accomplishments of Shakeda Gaines, whose years of service as President of the Philadelphia Home and School Council has immeasurably shaped parent and family engagement in public schools, set a precedent for how to incorporate social justice values into positions of leadership, and established a clear expectation for how public schools should educate, inspire, and empower students and families in Philadelphia.

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