

Legislation Text

File #: 160425, **Version:** 0

Recognizing and congratulating Leslie Odom, Jr., for his Tony Award nomination for Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role in a Musical for his role as Aaron Burr in *Hamilton*.

WHEREAS, Leslie Odom, Jr., was born in New York and grew up in East Oak Lane in Philadelphia, where he sang solos in the church choir at Germantown's Canaan Baptist Church. Mr. Odom attended Masterman, where he honed his skills in writing and reciting speeches. He received arts scholarships and attended theater classes, workshops, and plays across the City, including at the historic Freedom Theater, Pennsylvania's oldest African American theater; and

WHEREAS, In 1998, Mr. Odom attended an open audition for *Rent* as a 17 year-old 11th grader and landed a small role, making him the youngest actor ever cast in the show. After *Rent*, he returned to finish high school, and then spent four years attending Carnegie Mellon University's theater program and nine years acting on television in Los Angeles; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Odom has been working with Lin-Manuel Miranda, the creator of *Hamilton*, for almost three years. In the summer of 2013, Mr. Odom saw a workshop of what was then called the *Hamilton Mixtape* as part of a festival of new work at Vassar and New York Stage and Film's Powerhouse Theater. A few months later, Mr. Miranda asked Mr. Odom to join the next workshop in fall 2013; and

WHEREAS, *Hamilton* is a Pulitzer Prize-winning musical that has become a phenomenon by using hip-hop and a racially diverse cast of black and Hispanic actors to tell the story of the early Republic and life of founding father Alexander Hamilton. *Hamilton* has become one of Broadway's all-time biggest hits, with eight shows a week. President Barack Obama and celebrities including Beyoncé, Jay-Z, and Oprah have all attended the performance, and tickets have become notoriously difficult to get. *Hamilton* received a record 16 Tony Award nominations, including Best New Musical and Best Original Score; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Odom stars as the former vice president Aaron Burr who shot and killed Hamilton in a duel. In addition to serving as the production's antagonist, he also plays the role of narrator, introducing the audience to the story and carrying them throughout the show; and

WHEREAS, *The New York Times* described his performance as "suavely brooding" and described his song "The Room Where It Happens" as "a wicked meditation on being a political outsider" and "a full-fledged showstopper". *Variety* says Mr. Odom seems "invested in the difficult character of Aaron Burr, really sinking his teeth into the frustration and yearning that this troubled character reveals"; and

WHEREAS, On Tuesday, May 3, 2016, Mr. Odom was nominated for a Tony Award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role in a Musical; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby honors and recognizes Leslie Odom, Jr., for his acting and singing prowess and his Tony Award nomination.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Leslie Odom, Jr., as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.