



City of Philadelphia

City Council
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Legislation Text

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Honoring and recognizing the contributions of service worker, administrator, and faith leader, Bonnie Camarda, whose leadership and talent for relationship-building has bolstered the work of Philadelphia's most instrumental public interest organizations, uplifted Philadelphia's Latino community, and empowered underserved populations across the City.

WHEREAS, Bonnie Camarda was born and raised in Havana, Cuba. She recalls her time in Cuba as one of turmoil and struggle, which is why in 1967, at the age of 15, Camarda and her family left for Spain. The family's departure left behind her father, who had hopes for a better future on their island. She would not see her father again until her return in 1983, and would not return to her homeland until a 2016 mission trip with the Salvation Army brought her back to Cuba; and

WHEREAS, Bonnie Camarda finished her education in Madrid, and later went on to attend La Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, where she graduated with a bachelors in business administration. Following this accomplishment, Camarda traveled to the United States to attend the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1973, just three years after receiving her bachelors, Camarda obtained her MBA in business administration; and

WHEREAS, After graduating from Wharton, Bonnie Camarda was searching for a way to combine her skills in business administration with her faith. In 1981, Bonnie began pursuing a masters in divinity at Rice University. While completing her education, she also began to work as a pastor administrator at The Living Word Community Church; and

WHEREAS, In 1983, while working at her church, Bonnie Camarda realized that her congregation served a high number of children but lacked extracurricular camps to enrich their development. She desperately wanted to provide young people in Philadelphia with the opportunity to experience all of the outdoor activities and adventures available just a short drive outside of Philadelphia's City limits. As she searched for potential organizations to provide such a service, the Salvation Army was repeatedly referred to her. Thus, as she describes it, she went straight to their headquarters, knocked on their front door, built a relationship, and shared her vision for a camping trip to the Poconos; and

WHEREAS, The Salvation Army shared her passion for serving young people and they partnered with her to make this trip happen. This trip became an annual fixture of summer enrichment activities, and as time passed, Carmada's relationship with the Salvation Army blossomed. Their collaboration persisted, and in 1991, she was officially brought on staff, all the while continuing to work at her church. Carmada ceased working at the church in 1999 and began solely devoting her time to the Salvation Army, where she still works to this day as their Divisional Director of Partnerships; and

WHEREAS, Although Bonnie Camarda's tenure at her church ended in 1999, her tireless dedication to serving did not limit her ability to multitask several professional positions in other organizations. In 2000 Camarda became the Vice Chair of Esperanza Inc. and in 2011 she became a board member for Einstein Hospital. Just two years later, continuing her passion for community engagement and service, she became the Commissioner

for the Philadelphia Housing Department-all positions she continues to hold to this day; and

WHEREAS, Bonnie Camarda's dedication to public service, which includes notable accomplishments such as co-founding the Crocs Community Center, have not gone unnoticed. In 2008, Councilwoman Blondell Reynold Brown issued her the Woman Making a Difference Award. In 2012, the Girl Scouts of America issued her the Take The Lead award, and then in 2015, Senator Hughes gave her the Unwavering Commitment Award. Then in 2017, Presidents George W. Bush and Barrack Obama awarded her with the Roundtable for Faith-Based Initiatives with the Department of Health and Human Services; and

WHEREAS, 2018 was a very eventful year for Bonnie Camarda, as it saw her recognized on three separate occasions. The Governor's Advisory Council on Latino Affairs recognized her as one of Pennsylvania's 100 most influential leaders, the Philadelphia 76ers named her the Citizen of the year, and the City Council of Philadelphia issued her a citation for honorary Puerto Rican citizen of the year. Her most recent recognition came in 2019, by the United States Environmental Protection Agency Visionary Women, which issued her a Champions of Peace and Non-Violence Certificate of Appreciation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby honor and recognize the contributions of service worker, administrator, and faith leader, Bonnie Camarda, whose leadership and talent for relationship-building has bolstered the work of Philadelphia's most instrumental public interest organizations, uplifted Philadelphia's Latino community, and empowered underserved populations across the City.

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