City of Philadelphia

Legislation Text

File #: 210255, **Version:** 0

Recognizing Philly Tech Sistas on their work to diversify the tech scene in Philadelphia, with special acknowledgement to Ashley Turner for leading the group and her dedication to this effort.

WHEREAS, Under the leadership of Ashley Turner, Philly Tech Sistas has taken a large step in diversifying the tech world in Philadelphia. *The National Center for Women and Information Technology* released a report describing the demographic makeup of the tech world. They found that women represent 26% of the computing workforce but African American women only make up 3%, and Asian and Hispanic women make up 7% and 2%, respectively. Emboldened with this knowledge, Ms. Turner identified ways she could change this. Through Philly Tech Sistas, workshops focused not only on coding but also leadership skills, goal setting, and more have provided women of color with the skills they need to enter and be successful in the tech industry; and

WHEREAS, Ashley Turner began her career as part of the theater world as an audio engineer. She gained an interest in coding and building websites and sought to gain the skills she needed to enter the field. She took programming classes and attended local tech events to get her foot in the door. Throughout this time, she found herself isolated and saw a need for more diversity in the tech world. She says, "When I attended these events, I always noticed that there weren't a lot of people of color, and especially women of color … I always had a desire to have a space where women of color could attend these workshops together and not feel so marginalized"; and

WHEREAS, Philly Tech Sistas was established in 2014 as an informal organization where women in a similar position as Ms. Turner, feeling isolated in the industry, could come together and attend conferences and events with one another. Ms. Turner joined the group and a week later gained the opportunity to step up as the group's leader. Since then, she's transformed Philly Tech Sistas from an informal group to an organization that hosts workshops and classes to help women of color learn the skills they need to enter the industry. Their workshops and classes focus on everything from coding to website design to programming to career building; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Turner works to make sure all Lead Instructors in the program are women of color. She specifies this is because "Representation does matter … you can't be what you can't see". The organization is volunteer driven; and

WHEREAS, Before COVID-19 workshops came with a $25 fee to provide lunch and supplies. In 2020, all workshops were moved online and were free. In 2021, they launched a 6-week coding workshop at an affordable price and offered several scholarships. Membership since the pandemic has increased approximately by 20% to 1,500 people total; and

WHEREAS, To account for the increased interest and the need for more resources Ms. Turner has sought different funding sources. Receiving a grant through Philly Startup Leaders, where $75,000 is split up between 20 entrepreneurs. A majority of the grant has been used to transition workshops to an online format and to continue hosting webinars on career skills; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Turner works full time as an academic technologist at Swarthmore College. She's also the

chair for Swarthmore's WOC Employee Resource Group. In 2019, she was awarded the Technically Philly Award for Impact Leader of the Year; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby recognizes Philly Tech Sistas on their work to diversify the tech scene in Philadelphia, with special acknowledgement of Ashley Turner for leading the group and her dedication to this effort

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Ashley Turner as evidence of the sincere admiration and respect of this legislative body.