

Legislation Text

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Recognizing and honoring Kurt Evans for his impact in improving access to food, establishing workforce development opportunities for returning citizens, and contributing to a thriving Black food culture in Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Kurt Evans was born and raised in Southwest Philadelphia, near 46th and Woodland, and found a love of cooking through his family. He fondly remembers cooking southern style dishes alongside his grandmother Louise Evans; and

WHEREAS, Kurt honed his skills in some of Philadelphia's most esteemed kitchens, cooking professionally for over 14 years, and sparked his passion for social justice at his first venture in North Philadelphia called Route 23 Café, where his business partner Allen Young taught him the importance of hiring from the community and giving second chances to returning citizens; and

WHEREAS, Serving as culinary director at New York-based nonprofit Drive Change, Kurt managed a professional training fellowship program for formerly incarcerated youth; and

WHEREAS, Through his cooking, Kurt has drawn attention to social issues affecting Black Philadelphians. The End Mass Incarceration (EMI) Dinner series raises awareness and rallies the community around creating solutions to ending mass incarceration. A new initiative called Stories of Resilience is highlighting and fundraising for formerly incarcerated individuals are making a difference in the community; and

WHEREAS, In 2020, with Stephanie Nicole Willis, Malik Ali, Aziza Young and Gregory Headen, Kurt founded Everybody Eats Philly, an organization dedicated to fighting hunger, increasing food security and building community by distributing meals and fresh produce to communities in need; and

WHEREAS, With co-founder Lamar Covert, in 2022 Kurt created CYL Hospitality Group, a catering and event management business, and Black Dragon Takeout, a forthcoming venture that offers traditional Black American food through the aesthetics of classic Chinese American Takeout. Kurt is continuing to develop new and creative culinary enterprises that will create career opportunities for returning citizens as well as opportunities for youth that may be otherwise on the track to be incarcerated; and

WHEREAS, In recognition of his efforts to advance civil rights through the food and hospitality industry, Kurt was named a Champion of Change by "The World's 50 Best Restaurants" by San Pellegrino and a "Rising Talent" finalist from The Art of Plating in 2021; and in 2022, was named Whitney M. Young Powerbroker and Community Leader by the Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations (PACDC). Kurt has been featured in Food & Wine, Bon Appétit, Good Morning America, and Eater; and

WHEREAS, Kurt serves his community through social justice activism, working with Free The Ballot Pennsylvania as an organizer, and in coalition with advocates and organizations working to end mass incarceration and build healing, equity, and justice for Black and Brown communities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Council does hereby recognize and honor Kurt Evans for his impact in improving access to food, establishing workforce development opportunities for returning citizens, and contributing to a thriving Black food culture in Philadelphia.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Kurt Evans, further evidencing the sincere respect of this legislative body.