



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
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Legislation Text

File #: 190257, **Version:** 0

Honoring Marciene Mattleman for her tireless activism on behalf of Philadelphia's educational causes and celebrating her life.

WHEREAS, Marciene was born and raised in the Wynnefield Neighborhood of Philadelphia, where her parents set an early example of charitable conduct. Of them, she said, "They found causes they thought were important. They were not people necessarily who were well-schooled, but they knew what was important in life... I got that sense of giving back." Marciene would make it her mission not only to give back, but to make sure all Philadelphians had fair access to an education; and

WHEREAS, Marciene began her educational career as a sixth-grade teacher in Philadelphia before earning a Ph.D. in Education from Temple University, writing her dissertation after putting her children to bed each night. Raising children is a job in and of itself; that Marciene was able to complete her Ph.D. while doing it is a true testament to her tenacity; and

WHEREAS, Marciene taught at Temple for 18 years as a professor of reading and language. Her educational expertise and passion for the community made her a natural fit for the civic sphere, and in 1984, she left the relative security of academia to serve as Executive Director of the Mayor's Commission on Literacy under Mayor Wilson Goode. At the time, it was estimated that over half a million people in Philadelphia were functionally illiterate. Lesser individuals might have let the magnitude of the situation faze them, but Marciene, as she would at so many points over the course of her life, rose to the challenge; and

WHEREAS, Marciene raised over one million dollars for the Commission's work during its first year, and promptly put it to work in organizing tutoring programs that trained volunteers to teach reading skills. By the Fall of 1985, Marciene had helped establish 200 tutoring sites, housed in churches, corporations, and other organizations throughout the City, an astonishingly successful result; and

WHEREAS, Never content to rest on her laurels, Marciene, in a pattern that would be repeated throughout her career, left the Commission in 1989 to seek new opportunities to improve education in Philadelphia. In the following years, Marciene would go on to found a number of civically-minded programs, many of which remain familiar to us today; and

WHEREAS, Among these are the Philadelphia Futures Program, which matches students with donors and mentors to help the students prepare for college and the world of work, and After School Activities Partnerships (ASAP), which provide students after-school activities to enrich their lives and help keep them safe. Between establishing organizations, Marciene also managed to serve as Executive Director of the Philadelphia Reads Program under Mayor Ed Rendell. Of her propensity to leap into the unknown, Marciene said: "I love start-up, I love new challenges;" and

WHEREAS, In 2007, Marciene's myriad achievements were recognized with the Philadelphia Award, the City's highest civic honor. Upon winning the award, Marciene commented, "When you have a kid go to college who never thought they could, or learn to read, or win a chess tournament... it's wonderful to see.;" and

WHEREAS, With her health beginning to fail, Marciene finally retired as Chair of the Board of ASAP in 2015. Over 100 people, including three Philadelphia mayors, would show up to honor her on that occasion, with Mayor Michael Nutter presenting her a proclamation from the City and noting that she “started more service programs than any other person in the City’s history.” Mayor Rendell summed up her character well when he said that she was both “impossible” and “truly an angel.” Mayor Goode, with whom she had begun her work all those years ago, called her “one of the most unselfish, dedicated public servants I’ve known;” and

WHEREAS, Marciene’s lifelong mission to improve educational outcomes was shared by her husband of 68 years Herman Mattleman, himself a past recipient of the Philadelphia Award. Together, they had three children, all of whom followed their parents into public service- a resounding endorsement of the depth of civic spirit within the Mattleman household; and

WHEREAS, Marciene Mattleman died March 29, 2019 at the age of 89 after an extended battle with Parkinson’s disease. She is survived by her husband, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, the programs she created, and the countless lives she touched. Marciene recognized that no one succeeds without the support of others; what’s important is that we return this support to others in kind. As she said, “There is an enormous satisfaction to help other people get what they want from life”; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby honor Honoring Marciene Mattleman for her tireless activism on behalf of Philadelphia’s educational causes and celebrate her life.