

Legislation Text

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Honoring the life, work, and accomplishments of Paula Peebles, whose dedication to advocacy, organizing, and leadership has empowered Philadelphia's movements for class and race equity.

WHEREAS, At a young age, Paula Peebles noticed glaring injustices in her majority Black North Philadelphia neighborhood: housing conditions were unacceptable, education was underfunded, and neighborhoods were segregated and under-resourced based on racial lines. Through the tutelage of her activist mother, Ms. Peebles would begin to implement her mother's teachings to her passion for addressing these injustices; and

WHEREAS, At the age of 14, Ms. Peebles led the first ever student walk out in the City. Students used the walkout as an opportunity to express displeasure for the superficial and general lack of Black history taught in their schools. Just two years later, during her senior year of high school, Paula Peebles became a member of the Black Panther Party at the age of 16; and

WHEREAS, Following this decision, Ms. Peebles would move into the Black Panther Community on her own. Ms. Peebles was a member of the Black Panther Party for five years. While there, she became a talented lay-out artist, so much so that Mayor Wilson Goode requested her skills to help him on his campaign trail. During this time in her life, Ms. Peebles learned how to administer sickle cell anemia tests and worked in the Black Panther Party breakfast club throughout her tenure as a member; and

WHEREAS, Paula Peebles remained a member of the Black Panther Party until she moved to Oakland, where she continued her activism and community organizing. Eventually, Ms. Peebles returned to Philadelphia to continue her fight against injustices at home. She graduated from Temple University in 1980 with a bachelor's in education. Later in 1985, Ms. Peebles pursued a masters in Community and Economic development from Southern New Hampshire University; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Peebles went straight to work after graduating, founding the Renaissance Community Development Corporation in 1979. She would later go on to serve as President and CEO of the organization, whose main goal was to provide low-cost housing to low-income individuals and families, and to engage her community in the neighborhood's development. Ms. Peebles worked there for 38 years before she retired in 2017; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Peebles began to implement what she had learned into her aspirations. On October 25, 1997, dozens of women marched on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway to advocate for the story of being a Black woman in America. This massive event became known as the Million Women March, of which Ms. Peebles was a co-founder. Later in her life, Ms. Peebles became a professor at the University of Delaware, where she taught courses on community development from 2005-2012; and

WHEREAS, During this time in her life, Paula Peebles joined the National Action Network (N.A.N) in 2009. Because of her constant devotion to social justice, Ms. Peebles was brought to serve on the chair committee of the National Action Network for the Philadelphia chapter. She dedicated four years into serving this role, until she stepped down in 2015 so that she could found the Pennsylvania chapter of N.A.N, where she continues to

serve as a Chairperson. In 2018, Ms. Peebles joined the Black Women's Leadership Council upon its establishment. A year later, in 2019, Ms. Peebles was a founding member of the Philadelphia Human Relations Council, and, a year later, became the Vice President of the Council; and

WHEREAS, As an activist, Paula Peebles supported Stadium Stompers in successfully preventing further encroachment into North Central Philadelphia by Temple University's plans to build a football stadium. In 2015, Cordish Corp began to set plans to build a large casino in South Philadelphia. Fraught with allegations of racist practices, Peebles helped file a lawsuit and bring awareness of these allegations. Furthermore, she organized several protests which stalled the project for two years; and

WHEREAS, In 2017, Paula Peebles helped organize several of the George Floyd protests in Philadelphia. Her leadership was instrumental in the successful organization of these protests, while guiding and protecting participants in the marches. A year later, Ms. Peebles joined groups calling for the abolishment of Philadelphia's tax abatement, which contributes to the rapid displacement of long-time residents in gentrifying neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, Later in 2020, Paula Peebles finally saw the removal of racist mayor and police chief, Frank Rizzo's, statue. This accomplishment marked the end of a battle she had been engaged in since 2015, advocating for the removal of the statue which stood in front of City Hall since 1998. And just one year later, Ms. Peebles was already endeavoring in her next mission, supporting a law that would expand zoning boards from five to seven members. This law also mandated that community group leaders be included on these boards. This is just one of the many community development services that Ms. Peebles has been constantly involved in her entire life; and

WHEREAS, In a lifetime filled with contributions to our City, Paula Peebles has not forgotten her Black Panther roots. Today she serves as the Vice President for the National Alumni Association of the Black Panther party; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, that we hereby honor the life, work, and accomplishments of Paula Peebles, whose dedication to advocacy, organizing, and leadership has empowered Philadelphia's movements for class and race equity.

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