

## Legislation Text

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To commemorate the closing of Relish, the beloved West Oak Lane institution

WHEREAS, Relish, the brunch and jazz favorite from Robert and Benjamin Bynum (also known as the Bynum Brothers), closed in West Oak Lane on Sunday, January 22, 2023; and

WHEREAS, Relish had become a destination for both diners and politicians since its founding about 15 years ago; and

WHEREAS, On Ogontz Avenue in West Oak Lane, Relish became a brunch hot spot and jazz lounge, and it flourished for more than a decade under the management of Bynum Brothers Hospitality Group; and

WHEREAS, According to 6ABC Action News, the Bynum Brothers have long been invested in Philadelphia. In 1990, Robert and Benjamin Bynum opened a live-jazz venue, Zanzibar Blue, that gave food and music equal footing while serving a diverse clientele; and

WHEREAS, The brothers started in the club business learning from their father, Benjamin Bynum Sr., who owned neighborhood bars and founded the Cadillac Club at Broad Street and Erie Avenue in North Philadelphia, which hosted such stars as Gladys Knight and the Pips and Aretha Franklin; and

WHEREAS, In their own words, The Bynum Brothers' focus is "Let's provide the service. Let's provide a good product. Let's make people want to be a part of what we're doing." They developed a concept that there be equal emphasis placed on food and entertainment, allowing both to stand on their own if necessary; and

WHEREAS, The Bynum Brothers first arrived at West Oak Lane as consultants, brought on in 2007 by U.S. Representative Dwight Evans, who was at the time a State Representative hoping the restaurant could help revitalize the neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, According to *Billy Penn*, a series of prior restaurant concepts had foundered at 7152 Ogontz. Ave., which is still owned by the nonprofit Ogontz Avenue Revitalization Corp. But after the Bynums fully took over in 2009, the place became a destination - not just for Southern cuisine and jazz tunes, but for politicians wanting to see and be seen. By 2016, Relish was hosting what was arguably the region's biggest Election Day gathering; and

WHEREAS, Its political reputation has only grown over the years. President Joe Biden visited Relish while campaigning in November 2020, following in the footsteps of Vice President Kamala Harris, who made her stop at the West Oak Lane restaurant in September of that year; and

WHEREAS, Two other Bynum Hospitality locations closed shortly after the pandemic began, including Green Soul and Warmdaddy's. The Bynums also previously operated two spots in Chestnut Hill, Paris Bistro and Heirloom; and

WHEREAS, There wasn't anything specific that led to the decision to close Relish, Robert Bynum told *Billy Penn*. "We're both getting older, this is our 33rd year [in the hospitality business]," Bynum said. "Going through the pandemic, we realized something about our quality of life - or lack of quality of life. South and Southside, the event space next door, are going so well. We just really want to focus on that"; and

WHEREAS, Though they aren't looking to open any other concepts at this time, the brothers are staying involved as the Ogontz Avenue Revitalization Corp. searches for a new operator. "They very much want an African American operator," Robert Bynum said. "We're committed to helping fill that space"; and

WHEREAS, Relish will be sorely missed, both by the neighbors in West Oak Lane, but also by diners, jazz lovers, politicians, and others alike; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby commemorates the closing of Relish, the beloved West Oak Lane institution.

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