



# City of Philadelphia

City Council  
Chief Clerk's Office  
402 City Hall  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

## Legislation Text

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Honoring and recognizing Rita Addessa, a fierce and fearless activist for social justice and a transformative leader, who as the longtime Executive Director of the Pennsylvanian Lesbian and Gay Task Force played a critical and impactful role in the fight for the rights and opportunities for LGBTQ+ Philadelphians.

WHEREAS, Addessa was a lesbian feminist who never tired in her creative, bold, and relentless advocacy for a fair and just society for all. Her transformative work was guided by the simple principle that everything is possible and her efforts were informed by the understanding that no one is free until all are free; and

WHEREAS, Addessa, who often wore a double-headed ax, or *labrys*, symbolizing female-centered empowerment, vision, and strength, was unafraid to hold accountable the city's most powerful leaders and institutions, and has been described as a pioneer, a force of nature, a miracle in modern social activism, and a mighty warrior; and

WHEREAS, Addessa was a working-class, lifelong Philadelphian, who was born in the city in 1945 and graduated from West Philadelphia Catholic Girls High in 1963. After surgery for a bone disease as a girl, Addessa used a cane and a lift in her shoe for the majority of her life; and

WHEREAS, Addessa became the first full-time Executive Director of the Philadelphia Lesbian and Gay Task Force (later the Pennsylvania Lesbian and Gay Task Force or PLGTF) in 1980, a position she held for 25 years; and

WHEREAS, As the head of PLGTF, Addessa helped lead the successful campaign for Philadelphia's gay rights ordinance in 1982, which banned discrimination against gay and lesbian people in housing, employment, and public accommodation; and

WHEREAS, Addessa and PLGTF created a violence hotline and conducted a number of surveys, documenting the violence and discrimination faced by the LGBTQ+ community to pressure public officials to establish policies to protect and advance LGBTQ+ civil rights; and

WHEREAS, Addessa worked unapologetically to hold foundations and organizations accountable when they refused to provide resources to LGBTQ+ organizations, demanded that public agencies hire LGBTQ+ applicants, and fought for the Philadelphia Police Department to implement sexual orientation training; and

WHEREAS, Addessa and PLGTF worked hard to bring the issues of LGBTQ+ treatment to public consciousness and worked to have broadcast and print media acknowledge and accurately represent LGBTQ+ voices and people; and

WHEREAS, Addessa fought hard with and for Philadelphia students, demanding that the Philadelphia School District review and reform its curriculum so that minoritized youth had equal rights and an education that reflected their experience. In response, the School District implemented a policy that required all Philadelphia school teachers to incorporate concepts of gender equity, and culturally and racially diverse teachings in their

curriculum; and

WHEREAS, Addessa understood the power and importance of solidarity and spent her lifetime advocating and collaborating for women, people of color, people with disabilities, people living with HIV, union organizers and other oppressed people. Addessa additionally protested against environmental hazards, insufficient funding of public education, and championed public improvements for the disabled; and

WHEREAS, Addessa's lifetime of radical and intersectional work is a lesson on what can be achieved through fearless communal action, and her legacy is a roadmap to achieve a fair and just society for all; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Honors and recognizes Rita Addessa, a fierce and fearless activist for social justice and a transformative leader, who as the longtime Executive Director of the Pennsylvanian Lesbian and Gay Task Force played a critical and impactful role in the fight for the rights and opportunities of LGBTQ+ Philadelphians.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Rita Addessa's son, John Cugini, as an expression of the admiration and respect of this legislative body.