



City of Philadelphia

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

Legislation Text

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Recognizing and Honoring the Life and Music of Renowned Jazz Recording Artist Ahmad Jamal.

WHEREAS, Ahmad Jamal was born on July 2, 1930, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, He was a child prodigy who began to play the piano at the age of three and began formal studies at age seven; and

WHEREAS, While in high school, he studied under the tutelage of noted African-American concert singer and teacher Mary Cardwell Dawson and pianist James Miller; and

WHEREAS, He joined the musicians' union at the age of 14, and began touring after graduation from Westinghouse High School at the age of 17, drawing critical acclaim for his solos; and

WHEREAS, In 1951 he formed his first trio, The Three Strings and was eventually discovered by record producer John Hammond who signed them to Okeh Records, a division of Columbia, now Sony Records; and

WHEREAS, In 1955, under the Argo Records label he recorded his first album, which included jazz hits *New Rhumba*, *Excerpts From The Blues*, *Medley (actually I Don't Want To Be Kissed)*, and *It Ain't Necessarily So*, -- all later utilized by Miles Davis and Gil Evans on the albums *Miles Ahead* and *Porgy and Bess*; and

WHEREAS, Working with the house trio at Chicago's Pershing Hotel in 1958, Mr. Jamal made an on-location recording for Argo Records entitled *But Not For Me*. The resulting hit single and album remained on the Ten-Best Selling charts for an amazing 108 weeks- unprecedented for a jazz album; and

WHEREAS, In 1970, Mr. Jamal performed the title composition for the soundtrack of the film *MASH!* and in 1995, two tracks, *Music, Music, Music*, and *Poinciana* from his smash album *But Not For Me*, were featured in the Clint Eastwood film, *The Bridges of Madison County*; and

WHEREAS, In 1994, Mr. Jamal received the American Jazz Masters Fellowship Award from the National Endowment for the Arts and in that same year he was named a Duke Ellington Fellow at Yale University, where he performed commissioned works with the Assai String Quartet; and

WHEREAS, In June 2007, the French Government inducted him into the prestigious Order of the Arts and Letters; former recipients include Ella Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Jackson Pollack, Alan Ginsberg and Tony Morrison; and

WHEREAS, His latest recording, *It's Magic*, hit the Billboard Chart at #13 immediately after its release in the U.S. and in France he received the equivalent of a Grammy Award; approaching 80, his music remains youthful, fresh, imaginative and always influential; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jamal's connections to Philadelphia include performing on the Dick Clarke Show, broadcast from Philadelphia's famous Showboat; and

WHEREAS, He was quoted as saying: *Philadelphia certainly was one of my favorite cities and Broad Street and I were no strangers! You might know I worked with a song and dance team that was based at 52nd and Haverford, The Caldwells , and that is when I wrote one of my biggest copyrights, “Ahmad's Blues”*; and

WHEREAS, Ahmad Jamal continues an impressive performance schedule around the world after more than four decades, continuing his outstanding technical command and identifiable sound as a piano stylist incorporating a unique sense of space in his music- he is truly one of kind; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Philadelphia City Council Hereby Recognizes and Honors the Life and Music of Renowned Jazz Recording Artist Ahmad Jamal; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented as a Profound Expression of this Council’s Recognition and Appreciation.