



City of Philadelphia

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

Legislation Text

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Proclaiming May 2, 2022 as John Fryer Day in the City of Philadelphia for his contributions to Philadelphia and the LGBTQ Community.

WHEREAS, John Fryer practiced psychiatry in Philadelphia from 1967 to 2003; and

WHEREAS, John Fryer was a Professor of Psychiatry and of Family and Community Medicine at Temple University School of Medicine and had a private practice in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, The American Psychiatric Association classified homosexuality as a mental illness in its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, DSM-II. As a result of that classification and prior therapeutic protocol homosexuals were subject to chemical castration, electric shock therapy, mental institutionalization, and lobotomies; and

WHEREAS, This classification was used to buttress homophobic statutes and regulations. This classification was utilized to demonize homosexuals as perverts to be feared and loathed. Most states would not grant professional licenses to known homosexuals and if licensed and later found to be homosexual, they could have their licensure revoked; and

WHEREAS, At the 1971 American Psychiatric Association (APA) Annual Meeting Gay Rights Pioneers Frank Kameny and Barbara Gittings successfully demonstrated for a homosexuality panel at the 1972 APA Annual Meeting. Kameny and Gittings wished to have a gay psychiatrist on the panel, but none would risk losing their license and professional standing. At Gittings request John Fryer agreed to appear on the homosexuality panel under the pseudonym of Dr. Henry Anonymous while in a mask and using a voice modulator; and

WHEREAS, His testimony on May 2, 1972 at the APA Annual Meeting was so powerful that the APA undertook to determine whether the homosexuality classification was based on science or prejudice. In 1973 after study and review the APA membership voted to declassifying homosexuality as a mental illness; and

WHEREAS, John Fryer was the first American psychiatrist to speak publicly about his homosexuality. As a result of John Fryer's courage and articulate presentation the course of LGBTQ civil rights was seminally advanced; and

WHEREAS, During the AIDS crisis John Fryer was among the first, if not the first psychiatrist to provide professional services to those with HIV/AIDS and those who had lost loved ones: and

WHEREAS, The John Fryer archives are maintained at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and at staff recommendation the Philadelphia Historical Commission is expected to list John Fryer's residence on its Register of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, John Fryer's contributions to the LGBTQ Community has been made in to the celebrated theatre production of "217 Boxes of Dr. Henry Anonymous" as well as the movie "CURED"; and

WHEREAS, John Fryer is a LGBT History Month Icon and an American civil rights hero; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby proclaim May 2, 2022 John Fryer Day in the City of Philadelphia. This marks the 50th Anniversary of his testimony on homosexuality at the 1972 APA Annual Meeting in commemoration of his momentous and seminal LGBTQ civil rights activism.