

## Legislation Text

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Honoring and Commending Richard M. Gordon, IV for being named the 2021 National Principal of the Year by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and for his exemplary leadership as the head of Paul Robeson High School for Human Services.

WHEREAS, Richard M. Gordon, IV was born and raised in Camden, New Jersey. Though he grew up in poverty, he credited his parents' tireless efforts to secure him a solid education as instilling in him the fervent belief that every child has the right to a quality education; and

WHEREAS, In 2013, Paul Robeson High School for Human Services, located in West Philadelphia, was one of 27 schools slated for permanent closure by the School Reform Commission (SRC). Students and faculty at the school organized to save Robeson High. On the eve before the SRC vote, the *Public School Notebook* reported that Robeson had a 90% graduation rate. The school was spared from closure; and

WHEREAS, Later that year, Gordon was hired to turn around Robeson High School as its latest principal. Upon his arrival, Robeson was rapidly losing both staff and students. Recognizing the school's potential, Gordon dedicated himself to reclaiming the promise and possibility of Robeson High School; and

WHEREAS, Gordon immediately galvanized a team of transformative educators and passionate students and promoted a school culture built on service learning, innovative education, and community engagement. He especially prioritized the creation of a vibrant and cohesive school culture and the provision of comprehensive opportunities for college and career readiness for his students which extended beyond the classroom; and

WHEREAS, By 2017, Robeson High School had become the City's most improved public high school. In 2019, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania removed Paul Robeson High School from its academic intervention list. In 2017 and 2019, the high school was honored in *U.S. News & World Report* as a stellar model of turnaround; and

WHEREAS, Robeson High School records a 95% graduation rate, as it continues to serve a 100% minority student population with a poverty rate of 90% among its student body. It is a shining example that a supportive environment and outstanding educators are core factors in realizing the academic potential within every child; and

WHEREAS, As one Robeson student stated to the media, "[Principal Gordon] motivates people to be the best that they can be, and he leads by example. He sees potential in every student"; and

WHEREAS, The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is a national organization which serves as the primary voice for high school principals, assistant principals, and other school leaders across the United States and throughout over 45 countries; and

WHEREAS, NASSP bestows its annual Principal of the Year Award to one principal nationally who "exemplifies extraordinary community building and profound leadership"; and

WHEREAS, On October 13, 2020, NASSP named Richard M. Gordon, IV its 2021 Principal of the Year. Gordon is the first Philadelphia principal to receive this award, and one of only three Pennsylvania principals to have ever been bestowed this honor. Robert Motley, President of the National Association of Secondary Principals, stated, “Principal Gordon has led Robeson High School’s extraordinary turnaround keeping the success and well-being of his students a top priority”; and

WHEREAS, Gordon’s countless accolades and achievements include being named Pennsylvania’s Principal of the Year in July 2020, becoming a member of the Philadelphia Academy of School Leaders’ Neubauer Fellowship in Education Leadership, Black Enterprise Magazine’s Be Modern Men award of distinction, and Education Dive’s 2017 Administrator of the Year, among others; and

WHEREAS, After more than two decades of unparalleled service as an educator, Gordon remains fiercely dedicated to uplifting and empowering his students and staff to achieve their goals, stating that “We are in the business of educating and that’s our number one thing. We’ll never forget that . . . I feel like if we can facilitate the process of kids loving school, then school becomes one of the higher priority things in their lives”; and

WHEREAS, Under Principal Richard Gordon’s exceptional leadership, Robeson has demonstrated the possibilities of visionary leadership, dedicated staff, and engaged students and families in reclaiming the promise of public education. From the brink of closure to a model for other schools across the City and State, Robeson High School and its faculty prove that the fight to deliver on education equity remains as vibrant as ever in public education; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, HONORS and commends Richard M. Gordon, IV for being named the 2021 National Principal of the Year by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and for his exemplary leadership as the head of Paul Robeson High School for Human Services.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Principal Richard M. Gordon IV as an indication of the deep admiration and congratulations of our City Council body.