

Legislation Text

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Honoring and recognizing the life, work, and accomplishments of Rochelle Nichols-Solomon, whose dedication to serving, teaching, and advocating for students and marginalized peoples has improved the lives of people across the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Nichols-Solomon has dedicated more than 50 years to improving educational experiences and outcomes for Black and brown public school students and their families, bettering the lives and communities of countless Philadelphians; and

WHEREAS, Nichols-Solomon was inspired by her mother Mamie Nichols, a community activist who was revered in her Point Breeze community as a tireless organizer for neighborhood preservation and improved the quality of life in working-class neighborhoods across the city. Mamie Nichols also founded the first Home and School organization at her children's elementary school; and

WHEREAS, Nichols-Solomon and other progressive educators noticed that the issues most important to urban schools were often left out of the conversation at national conferences, and therefore in 1993 founded the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, an organization focused on community organizing and the vital intersection of schools and community; and

WHEREAS, Nichols-Solomon consistently worked to engage young people in her organizing, and during her time on the board of Youth United for Change, aimed to position young people, not as "window-dressing" for education initiatives, but as decision-makers and experts who could lead in serious ways; and

WHEREAS, Nichols-Solomon helped steer the legal battle for education justice, serving on the board of the Education Law Center where she fought for full and fair funding for schools, advocated for more fair treatment for Asian students, and worked toward greater integration of legal efforts with grassroots organizations and the broader education movement; and

WHEREAS, from 2016 until 2023, Nichols-Solomon led the School Advisory Council of Samuel Powel School, the neighborhood elementary school where her grandchildren were students, and in this role, she led a campaign for all elementary schools to have "key positions," including a lead literacy teacher, a lead math teacher, and a climate manager, that many Philadelphia public schools lack; and

WHEREAS, Nichols-Solomon was a founding member of the Philadelphia Public School Notebook, creating a vital source of information about public schools in Philadelphia, and working to engage parents, students, community members, and educators; and

WHEREAS, Nichols-Solomon, compelled by the organization's faith-based organizing and grassroots "bottom-up" approach, joined POWER Interfaith and has worked with the Education Justice team for nearly a decade; and

WHEREAS, Nichols-Solomon's work extended beyond the fight for education justice, including years of

service as a board member for Art Sanctuary, which brings art to the people, particularly art created by Black artists and writers, and ran an annual Black writing festival; and

WHEREAS, Nichols-Solomon, through her research and writing for organizations such as Research for Action and Phi Delta Kappan, highlighted the need for greater parent and community involvement in school reform efforts and mapped out practical strategies for change; and

WHEREAS, Nichols-Solomon brought her expertise as a researcher and community-based advocate to her role as the Director of the Post Secondary Success Portfolio for FHI 360, a global organization that mobilizes research, resources and relationships to provide people with the opportunities they need to lead full, healthy lives; and

WHEREAS, Nichols-Solomon was a founding member of the Sisters Remember Malcolm, a group of Black women who set out to enshrine the legacy of Malcolm X through annual programming during his birthday month in May and who, by educating young people about his life and contributions, helped to prevent his story from being lost to history; and

WHEREAS, for her tireless and transformative work to lift up young people in Philadelphia, Nichols-Solomon was awarded the Bread and Roses Fund Paul Robeson Lifetime Achievement Award in 2022; and

WHEREAS, Nichols-Solomon expertly bridged the gap between people and policy, organizing Philadelphia students, parents, and community members to take an active role in shaping the future of our schools and demanding that those in power recognize the wisdom, strength, and vision of Black and brown communities in Philadelphia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Honors and recognizes the life, work, and accomplishments of Rochelle Nichols-Solomon, whose dedication to serving, teaching, and advocating for students and marginalized peoples has improved the lives of people across the City of Philadelphia.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Rochelle Nichols-Solomon, as an expression of the admiration and respect of this legislative body.