Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title:	Recognizing and honoring Eileen Duffey-Bernt as the 2021 Pennsylvania School Nurse of the Year by the National Association of School Nurses and for a quarter century of serving and relentlessly advocating on behalf of student health and education justice for Philadelphia children.				
Sponsors:	Councilmember Gym, Councilmember Green, Councilmember Henon, Councilmember Squilla, Councilmember Bass, Councilmember Gilmore Richardson, Councilmember Parker, Councilmember Brooks, Councilmember Jones, Councilmember Domb, Councilmember Thomas				
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Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result	Tally
5/6/2021	0	CITY COUNCIL	ADOPTED		
4/29/2021	0	CITY COUNCIL	Introduced and Ordered Placed On Next Week's Final Passage Calendar		

Recognizing and honoring Eileen Duffey-Bernt as the 2021 Pennsylvania School Nurse of the Year by the National Association of School Nurses and for a quarter century of serving and relentlessly advocating on behalf of student health and education justice for Philadelphia children.

WHEREAS, Eileen Duffey-Bernt began her career as a school nurse in 1995, after stints as a pediatric nurse at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and as a sixth grade teacher. She credits her entry into the field to the encouragement of Eileen DiFranco, a school nurse and member of Ms. Duffey-Bernt's church. Duffey-Bernt has been a steadfast anchor of care for her students ever since; and

WHEREAS, Duffey-Bernt has served at a number of District schools and is currently a school nurse at the Academy at Palumbo. With high school students learning virtually this year due to the pandemic, Duffey-Bernt has embraced the changing nature of her role, regularly calling students to check up on their medical conditions and supporting students who are struggling with mental health issues exacerbated by the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, Beyond her direct service work with students in Philadelphia public schools, Duffey-Bernt's tremendous commitment to the health of young people has fueled her advocacy for transformational change in the educational space and broader world; and

WHEREAS, In the wake of a draconian education budget by then-Governor Tom Corbett and the mass layoffs of 47 District school nurses in 2011, Duffey-Bernt organized a 26-week protest at the steps of the School District of Philadelphia's headquarters and decried the endangerment of the health and safety of children in schools without school nurses. This became a multi-year advocacy campaign that resulted in restoration of full-time certified nurses in every District school in September 2016; and

WHEREAS, The District's guarantee of a full-time nurse at every District school made it one of the few large

school districts in the nation with such a commitment. The presence of a full time nurse at every public school has brought 12,000 students into immunization compliance, helped anchor a mental health and trauma support team known as STEP in certain District schools, and ensured the presence of at least one health professional as schools reopen post-pandemic; and

WHEREAS, Duffey-Bernt has called her work as a school nurse “a great calling” and in particular sees activism as a core part of her work as a health professional. Duffey-Bernt has been a powerful and consistent presence at monthly meetings of the Board of Education, City Council sessions, and public rallies, drawing attention to issues of racial justice, school funding, privatization, and labor rights over the past decade. From fighting against efforts to privatize the school nurses in 2013, to restoring staffing from 90 school nurses in 2014 to now over 300 full time certified nurses in every school building, to highlighting neglected building conditions and the dangers they pose to student and staff health, Duffey-Bernt has provided a model for informed, grassroots advocacy led by direct service professionals; and

WHEREAS, On April 9, the National Association of School Nurses selected Duffey-Bernt from seven finalists across the state as the 2021 Pennsylvania School Nurse of the Year. The honor is awarded annually to a Certified School Nurse who goes above and beyond in their role; and

WHEREAS, As a respected leader among her peers for her dedication to a life of service, Duffey-Bernt continues to be a vocal presence for young people at monthly Board of Education meetings, advocating for issues of student health and racial justice and challenging directives that may jeopardize the healthcare and well-being of students. In the words of the Superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia, Duffey-Bernt has “demonstrated the true meaning of child advocate”; and

WHEREAS, Duffey-Bernt thanked her colleague, Eileen DiFranco, for handing her the bullhorn as they were taking to the streets in 2011, shifting the course for her career towards outspoken advocacy. She stated that she has “finally reached a place where [her] greatest joy meets the world’s great need”; and

WHEREAS, Duffey-Bernt believes strongly that, even though nurses may be beholden to follow directives of school administrators, there are times in which the school-based, professional nurse must speak up authoritatively on matters of student health. This belief combined with her tireless defense of student health needs provides an inspiring vision for advocacy to her colleagues, other direct-service professionals, and our beloved City. Her legacy of service and advocacy is undeniable and evidenced in the many communities she has fought for over the years; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Recognizes and honors Eileen Duffey-Bernt as the 2021 Pennsylvania School Nurse of the Year by the National Association of School Nurses and for a quarter century of serving and relentlessly advocating on behalf of student health and education justice for Philadelphia children.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Eileen Duffey-Bernt as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.