

Legislation Text

File #: 130707, **Version:** 0

Recognizing and celebrating the accomplishments of Special Olympics Pennsylvania and the significant difference the organization has made in the lives of thousands of athletes with intellectual disabilities by giving them an opportunity to express joy and to experience success through athletic training and competition.

WHEREAS, Eunice Kennedy Shriver believed that people with intellectual disabilities were far more capable in sports and physical activities than many experts thought. Eunice and husband Sargent Shriver started a day camp in their backyard that eventually turned into the Special Olympics, a global movement that today serves more than 4 million athletes with intellectual disabilities in more than 170 countries; and

WHEREAS, The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community; and

WHEREAS, Special Olympics Pennsylvania became an official chapter in May of 1970 and hosted their first competition with 135 athletes. Today, Special Olympics Pennsylvania trains more than 20,000 athletes who participate in 22 Olympic-type sports at more than 260 local, sectional, and state level competitions and is at work in every county in Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, Special Olympics Unified Sports® is an inclusive sports program that combines an approximately equal number of Special Olympics athletes and partners without intellectual disabilities on teams for training and competition. The Unified Sports program promotes health, wellness, and social inclusion. Athletes and partners experience a sense of belonging, develop mutually rewarding relationships, are recognized as contributors, and are received with acceptance and respect; and

WHEREAS, Special Olympics Project UNIFY® incorporates Unified Sports along with education programs, leadership opportunities, and advocacy components designed to empower youth as agents of change in their schools and communities - fostering respect and dignity for people with intellectual disabilities. Project UNIFY helps school districts fulfill social inclusion, anti-bullying and school climate goals; and

WHEREAS, In just four years, Project UNIFY has engaged over 500,000 youth in 2,100 elementary, middle and high schools across 42 states. Here in Pennsylvania, the School District of Philadelphia has been leading the way. The Project UNIFY program in the School District of Philadelphia has engaged thousands of youth in more than 25 schools; and

WHEREAS, Last year, the first-ever Unified Soccer elective course was offered in 10 high schools. The course,

developed in partnership between the School District of Philadelphia and Special Olympics Pennsylvania, included curriculum with youth leadership components, anti-bullying elements and soccer training and competition; and

WHEREAS, A culminating city-wide championship game brought together athletes, fans, administrators, and dignitaries for an exciting morning of competition. Project UNIFY will grow to include 38 schools in Philadelphia during the 2013-14 academic year and also expand to include schools in both Northampton and Adams counties. Through a new partnership with the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association, Special Olympics PA plans to build on the success in Philadelphia and expand Unified Sports to schools statewide; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby recognize Special Olympics Pennsylvania and the Special Olympics Unified Sports program in bringing together individuals with and without intellectual disabilities on teams together for training and competition and allowing all involved to experience a sense of acceptance and respect.