

Legislation Text

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Honoring the life and activism of Rio de Janeiro City Councillor Marielle Franco, and expressing solidarity with public officials and advocates across the globe who bravely speak out for human rights.

WHEREAS, Marielle Franco was a prominent Brazilian human rights activist, leader of the Brazilian Black rights movement, and Rio de Janeiro City Councillor, who was a fearless advocate for the demilitarization of Brazilian police and for defending the rights and social service needs of under-resourced and overpoliced Brazilian low-income settlements, or *favelas*; and

WHEREAS, Franco was a Black, lesbian, single mother who came out of one of Rio's most impoverished *favelas*, the Maré, and used her experience of childhood poverty as motivation for a career in political activism. Her advocacy and legislative work, like her lived experience, was deeply intersectional and was rooted in bringing justice to *favela* dwellers, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people of color; and

WHEREAS, Throughout her career, Franco fought tirelessly for the human rights of historically marginalized Brazilians. A former kindergarten teacher in the Maré, Franco was responsible for creating the Brazilian state legislature's Committee for the Defense of Human Rights and Citizenship, and also worked for the Brazil Foundation and the Maré Center for Solidarity Studies and Action on social justice campaigns. Franco was elected to the Rio City Council in 2016, collecting the fifth highest vote total in a field of over 1,500 candidates and running on a platform of defending poor, Black women and those living in *favelas*; and

WHEREAS, Franco was the only Black female Councillor on Rio's 51-member City Council and once elected, she remained a staunch advocate for reproductive justice, increased resources for *favelas*, and an end to gender-based violence. She chaired the Women's Commission, formed a committee that monitored federal interference in Rio de Janeiro governmental operations, served on the Human Rights Commission, led campaigns to end sexual harassment on public transit and to increase the number of birthing centers in Rio de Janeiro. Franco also passed two key pieces of legislation: one regulating motorcycle taxis that frequent *favelas*, and another providing increased oversight to City Hall contracts with social health organizations; and

WHEREAS, Franco was an outspoken critic of the proliferation and aggression of police brutality across Brazil, and was staunchly opposed to the military seizure of police operations in Rio de Janeiro. Franco frequently denounced the abuses committed by the Military Police and publicly called for an end to a Brazilian military police state that failed to value the lives of Afro-Brazilians and those living in poverty; and

WHEREAS, In response to an unjustified and inexplicable murder of a citizen at the hands of the police on March 13, Franco tweeted, "another homicide of a young man that could be credited to the police. Matheus Melo was leaving church when he was killed. How many others will have to die for this war to end?" A day later, Franco spoke at the "Young Black Women Moving Power Structures" roundtable. As she was leaving the event, Franco, along with her driver, was assassinated at the age of 38; and

WHEREAS, Among her final spoken words in public, Marielle Franco emphasized the importance of unity and solidarity, declaring, "alone we can't do anything," and echoing the words of Audrey Lorde: "I am not free

while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own”; and

WHEREAS, Franco is survived by her partner, Mônica Tereza Benício, and her 19-year-old daughter Luyara Santos, who wrote, “They killed my mother and 46,000 more voters! We will be resistance because you have been fighting!”; and

WHEREAS, The killers of Marielle Franco failed to silence an iconic voice for justice. In the aftermath of Franco’s death, thousands of Brazilians mourned and rallied in Franco’s honor under the cry “Marielle Presente!” and human rights activists across the globe have joined together to condemn her murder and to shed light on the dangers that defenders of human rights face in Brazil. In Rio state, 154 people were killed “in opposition to police intervention” in January 2018 alone, according to *The Guardian*; and

WHEREAS, Franco’s brave, tenacious, and fearless fusion of human rights activism and municipal government serves as an inspiration for all policymakers fighting alongside marginalized communities. Her dedication, courage, and resilience highlights the threatening conditions that Black women, queer, and other activists must transcend in order to fight for human rights; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Honors the life and activism of Rio de Janeiro City Councillor Marielle Franco, and expresses solidarity with public officials and advocates across the globe who bravely speak out for human rights.