



Legislation Text

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Honoring and Recognizing the Late, Great Donald Gardner, the Accomplished Artist and Executive Director of The Philadelphia Clef Club of Jazz.

WHEREAS, A native of North Philadelphia, Donald Gardner was a product of the City's public schools. Lacking a formal music education, he taught himself to play the drums and sing. He fell in love with music and began sneaking into local jazz clubs to sing in his teenage years. Philadelphia jazz greats including Joseph "Philly Joe" Jones gave him all the informal music education he needed; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gardner began performing solo in 1947. In 1953, Mr. Gardner began his first group, the Sonotones, which included the then-unknown jazz organ great Jimmy Smith; and

WHEREAS, In 1962, Donald Gardner wrote and (with Dee Dee Ford) performed the top-20 hit, "Need Your Lovin'," which made it to the 4th spot on the R&B charts at the time and was covered later by such greats as Otis Redding and Tom Jones; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gardner performed with stars such as Baby Washington, Dinah Washington, and Grover Washington, Jr. and toured with the likes of Sam Cooke, the Drifters, and Curtis Mayfield. Music took him across the country, as he performed in domestic black-owned clubs and abroad; and

WHEREAS, In the 1980s, Mr. Gardner returned to performing solo and became an artist and repertoire (A&R) manager. In 1985, he embarked on a new adventure as part of the management of The Philadelphia Clef Club of Jazz; he was named president of the Clef Club's board in the early 1990s; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gardner thrived in leadership roles at the Clef Club; over the years, he served as president, executive director, operations manager, and facilities manager for this cornerstone of the Philadelphia jazz scene; and

WHEREAS, One of the biggest parts of Mr. Gardner's legacy is the advice and wisdom he imparted to younger musicians. Artists of all skill levels, from Jimmy Smith to Kenny Gamble to George Benson to the youth participants in the Clef Club's jazz education programs, have benefited from Mr. Gardner's counsel; and

WHEREAS, One of Philadelphia's own, Donald Gardner became a titan of his hometown's musical legacy, actively working to instill a love of music in younger generations until his passing at age 87. This singer, drummer, composer, mentor, leader, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather will be dearly missed by all those who had the pleasure to know him; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby honors and recognizes the late, great, Donald Gardner, the accomplished artist and Executive Director of The Philadelphia Clef Club of Jazz.

RESOLVED FURTHER, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Donald

Gardner, further evidencing the sincere condolences of this legislative body.