File #: 190166, **Version:** 0

Honoring and Commemorating the Life and Legacy of Ken Derstine, a Dedicated Philadelphia School District Teacher and Resilient Public Education Advocate.

WHEREAS, Kenneth Lee Derstine was a dedicated Philadelphia public school educator for 37 years, teaching technology and special education in a number of schools, including William M. Meredith and Bache-Martin Elementary Schools. He was nominated for Teacher of the Year in 1994; and

WHEREAS, Derstine received a Bachelor's Degree in Education from West Chester University in 1972, and a Master's Degree in Special Education from Antioch College in 1977; and

WHEREAS, Derstine's retirement from the School District did not end his career of advocacy on behalf of Philadelphia students. Upon retirement, he joined Occupy 440 and participated in demonstrations outside of School District Headquarters, calling for the restoration of educational services and essential staff; and

WHEREAS, A self-described "defender of public education," Derstine was a founding member of the Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools (APPS), a public education advocacy organization primarily composed of retired teachers who contest the privatization of public education and seek reinvestments in public schools. Derstine spearheaded meticulous research reports, and videotaped School Reform Commission meetings to create a public record; and

WHEREAS, Derstine spent much of his retirement chronicling the involvement of "big money interests" in public school education, authoring *Pennsylvania Education Crisis Highlights*, a daily newsletter that collected news stories about public education and the devastating effects of corporate reform. He used this publication to rebuke the increasing involvement of the corporate machine in public education. He explained that he continued to publish *Pennsylvania Education Crisis Highlights* to "attempt to shine a light into the darkness we are living in"; and

WHEREAS, While Derstine often conducted behind-the-scenes research for advocacy groups, he spoke truth to power in May 2018 to challenge the planned phase out of Strawberry Mansion High School due to declines in student population. As always, he conducted thorough research and grounded his concerns in the history of Strawberry Mansion and his conversations with community members, attributing declining enrollments to "an economic, social, and psychological war...waged against the school over many years"; and

WHEREAS, Derstine has been described by his activist peers as "a kind man, who always saw the good in children, their ability to learn and contribute to his classroom, the school, our City and our future. Derstine was always teaching. He was a lifelong learner who sought to satisfy his immense curiosity about the world's places, people and cultures, and always desired to share what he had learned with anyone he could reach"; and

WHEREAS, Derstine's health began to decline as local control was restored to Philadelphia schools. Nevertheless, his legacy of redressing school governance decisions that favored outside contracts in lieu of providing certified, unionized educators with the necessary supports and tools to serve Philadelphia students

still reverberates within the walls of 440 N. Broad Street. He made sure that his work would be passed on to current and future education advocates to continue the mission of full investment in public schools; and

WHEREAS, In addition to his passion for public education, Derstine actively participated in the cultural fabric of Philadelphia, regularly attending public lectures at the Free Library and frequenting the City's museums; and

WHEREAS, Derstine's writings always included a call to action, reminding us that the fights for investments in our public schools always begin with those at the grassroots level: "Grassroots organizations must organize to oppose the privatization of all public services including public education. Eventually there will have to be an independent political struggle against those who would reduce the majority of the population to servitude for the few oligarchs who are currently running the United States...So, which side are you on?"; and

WHEREAS, Kenneth Derstine passed away at age 70 on January 26, 2019. He is survived by siblings Sharon, Carol, Betty, and C. Dale, and a niece and two nephews. His life and legacy will be memorialized by his public education advocate family on Sunday, March 10 at the Unitarian Society of Germantown. Derstine's commitment to students, public schools, and his partners in the fight for education justice will long be remembered; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Honors and commemorates the life and legacy of Ken Derstine, a dedicated Philadelphia School District teacher and resilient public education advocate.

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