

Legislation Text

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Commending various private, not-for-profit, and governmental entities for adopting the “Accessible Icon”, and calling on the City of Philadelphia to utilize this logo for all new public works projects.

WHEREAS, The icon that represents inclusive design for people with physical disabilities was first conceived as an empty wheelchair by Danish design student Susanne Koefoed as part of a 1968 competition sponsored by the United Nations and the International Standards Organization; and

WHEREAS, The symbol, which is now a person sitting in a wheelchair, was not widely used until 1990, when George W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and made it official; and

WHEREAS, In 2010, artist and design researcher Sara Hendren and philosophy professor Brian Glenney wanted to draw attention to the symbol as a way to address issues around inclusivity. They launched the Accessible Icon Project in order to introduce a new icon that features a more dynamic figure - one that aimed to portray individuals with physical disabilities in a new light; and

WHEREAS, The Accessible Icon image is not just a person sitting in a wheelchair; instead, the image is more dynamic and shows more movement; and

WHEREAS, Since the Accessible Icon was conceived, more designers have joined the cause in trying to make the new symbol the new official symbol used by governments, businesses, and organizations across the world; and

WHEREAS, The Accessible Icon is now being used by various local private, not-for-profit, and governmental entities such as Einstein Medical Center Philadelphia, MossRehab, Citizens Bank Park, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, University of the Sciences, and Inglis House; and

WHEREAS, Nationally, the Accessible Icon is also catching on, and several state and local governments have adopted the new symbol, including New York State, Connecticut, and more recently Wildwood, New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia should join these “early adopter” governmental entities and begin to incorporate the Accessible Icon into all new public works projects; and

WHEREAS, As designer Tim Ferguson Sauder, who joined the project to help bring the icon in line with the Department of Transportation’s ISO DOT 50 standards, said, “I’ve thought about what an accessibility symbol might look like if I were creating it from scratch. But when you’re dealing with one of the most recognized symbols in the world and you’re working with city and state governments there’s a tradeoff: do you do something that will be recognized and will actually help people find out where to park, or do you do something that’s truer to the reality and perhaps more abstract, but so far afield that it really couldn’t be used without some major educational component? It became clear that a refinement would allow us to continue the work started by the old mark, and the evolution continues”; and

WHEREAS, Sauder further stated, “At end of day, we hope things change. We hope architects have accessibility in the forefront of their minds. Our goal isn’t to make every sign look like our icon; our goal is to change how the world is built and how people are afforded access to spaces”; and

WHEREAS, If Philadelphia were to adopt the Accessible Icon, it would be a step in the right direction to making the City, and its public spaces, more accessible and inclusive; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby commends various private, not-for-profit, and governmental entities for adopting the “Accessible Icon”, and calls on the City of Philadelphia to utilize this logo for all new public works projects.