City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Urging the U.S. Department of the Treasury to reconsider the decision to delay the redesign of the $20 bill to feature 19th century abolitionist leader Harriet Tubman.

WHEREAS, Harriet Tubman was born as Araminta Ross, a slave in Dorchester County on Maryland's Eastern Shore around 1820 or 1821. Tubman and two brothers escaped slavery via the Underground Railroad in 1849, and she later helped dozens of others escape, becoming known as one of the most famous conductors of the Underground Railroad that led slaves to freedom. Tubman also served as a spy for the Union during the Civil War and pushed for women's suffrage; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, Treasury officials announced that the likeness of Tubman would be placed on the $20 bill, replacing the likeness of former President Andrew Jackson. The plan was for the new $20 bill to be unveiled in 2020, coinciding with the 100th Anniversary of women gaining the right to vote. Tubman would be the first African-American to be pictured on American currency; and

WHEREAS, In May 2019, current U.S. Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin said the $20 bill redesign would not be considered until 2026. Furthermore, Mnuchin said the redesigned $20 bill will not come out until 2028; and

WHEREAS, Several federal, state, and local leaders have spoken out against the decision to delay the redesign of the $20 bill. Notably, U.S. Rep. Elijah Cummings, a Baltimore Democrat and one of the most prominent champions of putting the famous abolitionist on the $20 bill, has taken a stance against the Treasury Department decision; and

WHEREAS, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan wrote a letter to Secretary Mnuchin, asking him to reconsider the decision to delay the redesign of the $20 bill, citing her undeniable impact on her home state of Maryland and the country as a whole; and

WHEREAS, Governor Hogan wrote, "Harriet Tubman's countless contributions to our nation transcend race, gender, nationality, and religion. She dedicated her life in selfless service to others and to the cause of freedom. Her unbelievable acts of heroism, courage, and sacrifice have more than earned her rightful place among our nation's most pivotal leaders. She deserves this honor"; and

WHEREAS, Many Americans are choosing not to wait until 2028, and are taking matters into their own hands. Consumers are buying Harriet Tubman stamps and using them to ink Tubman's face onto $20 bills themselves; and

WHEREAS, As Jenice Armstrong wrote in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, "Our job is to agitate. We need to sign petitions. Alert our representatives. Write letters and make sure the Trump administration knows that we're paying attention and we see the inaction on this issue for what it is. And when we get tired of doing all of that and feel hopeless, we need to stop and ask ourselves: What would Tubman do? That should be motivation enough to keep going. If nothing else, we should be buying that Tubman stamp and updating our $20 bills ourselves instead of waiting for the Treasury Department to get around to it. If Tubman were alive, I guarantee

you that's what she would do"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby urges the U.S. Department of the Treasury to reconsider the decision to delay the redesign of the $20 bill to feature 19th century abolitionist leader Harriet Tubman.