

Legislation Text

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Honoring the African American Children's Book Project on the Occasion of its 28th Annual African American Children's Book Fair.

WHEREAS, Philadelphia struggles with a double-digit illiteracy rate among those 16 and older, underscoring the importance of providing children with early opportunities to learn to read, and beyond that, to develop a love for reading; and

WHEREAS, Studies show that children who read outside of school coursework tend to excel in other aspects of their lives. Book Fairs provide children with a venue to explore their curiosity and interests, and motivates children to read by offering them a wide selection of different books to browse; and

WHEREAS, The African American Children's Book Fair is one of the oldest and largest single-day events for African American children's books in the country, with an average annual attendance of over 3,500 children, caregivers, and educators. Rich or poor, no one leaves empty-handed, as the books themselves are priced at a level where they are more affordable, and posters, bookmarks, and raffle books are distributed free of charge to attendees; and

WHEREAS, The Book Fair highlights books that enlighten and empower children, and features some of the most exciting children's authors from the multicultural literary community. Its goal is not merely to get children reading, but to foster in them a lifelong passion for the activity that enriches their lives. The event is a product of the African American Children's Book Project; and

WHEREAS, Vanesse Lloyd-Sgambati is the founder and CEO of the African American Children's Book Project. She created the African American Children's Book Project to preserve and promote youth literature written and illustrators about African American. As a literary consultant, she is a much sought-after expert on trends in diverse books and how to incorporate these books into homes, schools and libraries. She created the Book Fair because she believes that all children should have access to books that reflect their images. With the Book Fair in its 28th year, it is clear that Lloyd-Sgambati's vision continues to resonate within the Philadelphia community; and

WHEREAS, Each year to kick-off Black History Month, the African American Children's Book Project honors people in the community who open the pages of book and keep the literary flames ablaze in not only Philadelphia, but across the country; and

WHEREAS, This year's Book Fair will highlight individuals who have made contributions to Literacy; this year they will honor PECO's director of Corporate and Community Relations, Romona Riscoe Benson, author, Kelly Starling Lyons, President of NBC10, Ric Harris, and author, Tami Charles; and

WHEREAS, Ramona Riscoe Benson joined PECO after serving as President and CEO of the African American Museum in Philadelphia, where she led a turnaround strategy, directed a multi-million dollar building renovation project and installation of a nationally recognized exhibit on the early life of African Americans in

Philadelphia. She serves on numerous boards and committees in Philadelphia, including People's Light, Mayor's Commission on Arts, Culture & Creative Economy, Philanthropy Network, Women of Destiny, Brandywine River Art Museum and Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation. She has served with the Philadelphia School Partnership, Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, and Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau; and

WHEREAS, Ric Harris is the President and General Manager of NBC10 Philadelphia/WCAU and Telemundo62/WWSI, the NBCUniversal-owned stations serving the Philadelphia market. He serves on the board of the Boys and Girls Club, Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, Philadelphia Ad Club, Police Athletic League and Pennsylvania Association of Broadcasters. He also serves as the Executive Champion for BEN, NBCUniversal's employee resource group for African American Employees. He is a shining light in keeping his corporate entity connected to the community; and

WHEREAS, Kelly Starling Lyons, is a Pittsburgh native and award-winning author whose more than a dozen titles for children span easy readers, picture books, chapter books, fiction, nonfiction, and series. For more than 15 years, Lyons has been creating inspiring books that center Black heroes, celebrate family and appeal to all audiences. Her acclaimed titles include *Going Down Home with Daddy*, *Sing a Song: How Lift Every Voice & Sing Inspired Generations*, the *Jada Jones* chapter book series and her latest book, *Dream Builder: The Story of Architect Philip Freelon*; and

WHEREAS, Kelly Starling Lyons' book, *Dream Builder: The Story of Architect Philip Freelon*, shares the moving journey of Freelon from a boy growing up in Philadelphia who loved drawing and building models to becoming the architect of record for the National Museum of African American History & Culture. Lyons counts starred reviews, Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People, Best of the Year lists, Junior Library Guild selections and a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor among the accolades her books have received. Two of her books, *Hope's Gift* and *Going Down Home with Daddy*, have represented the states of North Carolina and Georgia, respectively, at the National Book Festival's Parade of the States. Lyons is a founding member of The Brown Bookshelf, a team dedicated to raising awareness of Black children's book creators, and a teaching artist who visits schools, libraries, conferences and festivals nationwide. She lives in North Carolina with her husband and children where she facilitates a book club for boys that salutes literary treasures from Black authors and illustrators of today and the past; and

WHEREAS, Tami Charles is a graduate of The College of Saint Elizabeth, Tami earned her bachelor's degree in Communication and was an esteemed member of Lambda Pi Eta Honor Society. She received her Master's in School Leadership and Administration from Fairleigh Dickinson University. Tami holds school principal certification in the states of New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. She lives in central New Jersey with her husband of thirteen years and her ten-year-old son. When Tami isn't writing, she can be found presenting at schools both stateside and abroad; and

WHEREAS, Charles writes books for children and young adults. Her middle grade novel, *Like Vanessa*, earned Top 10 spots on the Indies Introduce and Spring Kids' Next lists, three starred reviews, and a Junior Library Guild selection. Her recent titles include a humorous middle grade, *Definitely Daphne*, picture book, *Freedom Soup*, and Young Adult novel, *Becoming Beatriz*, which Kirkus recognized as one of the Best Books of 2019. Tami has been featured on broadcasts for This Is It TV, Good Day Philadelphia, BET, and Good Morning America.

WHEREAS, The 2020 African American Children's Book Fair will take place on Saturday, February 1 at the

Community College of Philadelphia, from 1PM to 4 PM. This year's event is produced by the Literary Media and Publishing Consultants; and

WHEREAS, Council has no doubt that this year's iteration of the Book Fair will meet all the lofty expectations inspired by its history of excellence. We encourage all of our City's residents, young and old alike, to discover, for the first time or once again, the wonders to be found in the pages of a good book; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby honor the African American Children's Book Project on the Occasion of its 28th Annual African American Children's Book Fair.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Vanesse Lloyd-Sgambati, for her hard work and efforts in the promotion of children's literacy, as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.