

Legislation Text

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Recognizing and Honoring Drew Weissman, MD, PhD, and Katalin Kariko, PhD, for their visionary discoveries at the University of Pennsylvania leading to development of the messenger ribonucleic acid technology which is the foundation of leading COVID-19 vaccine candidates.

WHEREAS, Dr. Drew Wiessman and Dr. Katalin Kariko, now prominent players in academia and the private biotech world, researched at the University of Pennsylvania beginning in the 1990s. Drew Weissman, MD, PhD, is a professor of infectious diseases at the Perelman School of Medicine at Penn, and Katalin Kariko, PhD, is an adjunct associate professor at Penn; and

WHEREAS, The potential of harnessing mRNA for vaccines and other therapeutic was not yet fully appreciated by the scientific community when they began their work. They knew that mRNA's promise was real and they kept working towards capturing its potential; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Weissman and Dr. Kariko discovered that introducing certain chemical modifications into messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA) molecules can greatly increase its therapeutic potential, paving the way for use in a wide array of potential vaccines and treatments; and

WHEREAS, Weissman's and Kariko's discoveries made key changes to the molecular structure of mRNA that allow them to enter into target cells to efficiently instruct them to create antigens or other proteins that fight or treat disease; and

WHEREAS, These technologies are foundational components of two leading COVID-19 vaccine candidates under development, which upon approval, will be the first RNA-based vaccines for any disease; and

WHEREAS, Beyond COVID-19, the mRNA technology pioneered by Dr. Weissman and Dr. Kariko holds great promise for new approaches to treat other conditions including cystic fibrosis, sickle cell anemia as well a number of infectious diseases and cancers; and

WHEREAS, Thanks to the tenacity and dedication of Dr. Kariko and Dr. Weissman and their colleagues, the world is on the cusp of creating vaccines, medicines and other treatments with mRNA. Because of that perseverance we can begin to imagine a world free of Covid-19; and

WHEREAS, These discoveries are emblematic of the spirit Penn Medicine which focuses its mission on discoveries that advance science, outstanding patient care, and education of physicians and scientist who carry a legacy of excellence that positively impacts the world; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, HEREBY recognizes and Honors Drew Weissman, MD, PhD, and Katalin Kariko, PhD, for their visionary discoveries at the University of Pennsylvania leading to development of the messenger ribonucleic acid technology which forms a foundation of leading COVID-19 vaccine candidates.

