

Legislation Text

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Honoring and celebrating Philadelphia's Living Legends: Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, Rev. Gregory Holston, Rev. Mark Tyler, Deputy Police Commissioner Melvin Singleton, State Representative Joanna McClinton, and the Doctors of the Black Doctors Consortium, who were the "Guiding Lights" of the year 2020 and are trailblazers and leaders in their respective fields of medicine, research, politics, religion, the justice system and community outreach, as part of the commemoration of Black History Month.

WHEREAS, Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett is a scientist who was instrumental in the development of the COVID-19 vaccine. As one of the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Vaccine Research Center's experts, Dr. Corbett helped lead the team of scientists who developed the vaccine. The NIH has a partnership with the University of Pennsylvania, the NIH-Penn Immunology partnership, which allows students access to 350 immunology laboratories. From an early age, Dr. Corbett knew she wanted to make a difference through her passion for the science. She was selected as one of the esteemed participants for Project SEED, a program for gifted minority students that allowed her to study and hone her budding interest in the sciences at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In 2004, Dr. Corbett attended the University of Maryland, Baltimore, as a Meyerhoff Scholar. Soon after, Dr. Corbett enrolled in a doctorate program at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, where she also worked at a Graduate Research Assistant studying virus infections while earning a PhD in microbiology and immunology. Dr. Corbett stated that it was important to her to be visible as one of the key players who developed the COVID-19 vaccine and not simply be a hidden figure, because she wants to inspire and empower younger scientists and people of color; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Gregory Holston is a leader, pastor, and a community activist, who has committed his life to fighting for fairness and justice. Rev. Holston is currently the Senior Advisor on Advocacy and Policy for the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office. Rev. Holston is the former Executive Director of POWER Philadelphia, an interfaith-based justice advocacy organization. During his time with POWER, Rev. Holston led countless advocacy initiatives for various causes, including gun prevention, police accountability, a \$15 minimum wage for workers, and the equitable funding for Philadelphia's public schools. Rev. Holston holds a Juris Doctorate from Georgetown University Law Center, a Master of Divinity from the Lutheran Theological Seminary, a Master of Education from Cheney University, and a Bachelor of Arts from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Rev. Holston believes that his new position will advance his continued commitment to criminal justice reform; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Mark Kelly Tyler is an ordained itinerant elder and has served as the 52nd Senior Pastor of the historic Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Philadelphia since 2008. After earning a Bachelor of Arts at Clark Atlanta University, Rev. Tyler went on to earn a Master of Divinity at the Payne Theological Seminary and later on, earned a Ph.D. at the University of Dayton. Rev. Tyler's lengthy resume is a testament to his dedication and contribution to his vocation. Rev. Tyler has been consulted on numerous films about religion and culture. He even made an appearance in one of these cinematic projects, the Dr. Henry Louis "Skip" Gates PBS documentary, titled, "The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross." Following the shooting at the Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC, Rev. Tyler pushed for Mother Bethel to get involved with the Black Lives Matter Movement and the activist clergy group, POWER. Rev. Tyler participated in the Black Lives Matter protests in Philadelphia, as well as the one in Ferguson, MO. In

describing what social justice means to him, Rev. Tyler borrowed a passage from the bible as he explained that justice is “something we must do...to ensure that all yokes of oppression are broken in the lives of all citizens”; and

WHEREAS, First Deputy Police Commissioner Melvin Singleton, who joined the Philadelphia Police Department in 1993, quickly rose through the ranks in the Department. During his time in the Department, Singleton worked tirelessly to bridge the gap and improve relations between the community and police. Singleton was an Officer in the 19th District in West Philadelphia for five years, a Sergeant in the 15th District in Northeast Philadelphia for one year, a Sergeant in the 16th District in West Philadelphia for over two years, a Lieutenant in the 1st District in South Philadelphia for two years, and a Lieutenant in the Citywide Narcotics Field Unit for over three years. He also served as Captain of the 19th District for five years. His work ethic and commitment to serving his community is unmatched. In June 2020, he was promoted to Deputy Commissioner by Police Commissioner, Danielle Outlaw. As Deputy Commissioner, Melvin Singleton served as second in command to Commissioner Outlaw. On January 11, 2021, Deputy Commissioner Singleton announced his retirement from the force due to a health issue. Albeit a great loss to the City, Singleton’s years of dedicated service to the people of Philadelphia will undoubtedly be celebrated long past his retirement; and

WHEREAS, State Representative Joanna McClinton is an attorney, a fierce advocate of criminal justice reform, and an ordained preacher. Hailing from Southwest Philadelphia, Representative McClinton has been breaking the glass ceiling one shard at a time and paving the way for those to come after her. Representative McClinton recently made history as not only the first woman, but the first African American woman elected to lead her party in the Pennsylvania House. Prior to starting her impressive career in politics, Representative McClinton was a force to be reckoned with as an Assistant Public Defender in Philadelphia. After graduating from Grace Temple Christian Academy, Representative McClinton went on to earn a dual degree in Political Science and Leadership in Global Understanding from La Salle University. She then went on to the Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law, where she received her Juris Doctor. After working as a trial attorney in Harrisburg for several years, McClinton decided to run for office in 2015 when she realized that the legislators enacting the state’s criminal laws were not mirrored by the minorities most impacted by these laws. As state representative, McClinton continues to fight for social and criminal justice reform. In her new role as the Democratic House leader, Representative McClinton plans to focus on economic and health care disparities in both rural and urban areas; and

WHEREAS, The Doctors of the Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium’s (BDCC) mission is to educate and advocate for African Americans and reduce the incidence of disease and death from coronavirus by providing a testing alternative that is barrier free and accessible to Philadelphia’s hardest-hit communities. At the outset of the pandemic, Dr. Ala Stanford, a pediatric surgeon in Philadelphia noticed that there was a testing shortage that was disproportionately impacting the city’s African American population. Dr. Stanford’s response was to create the BDCC. Since its conception, the BDCC has administered more than 20,000 tests throughout the city using their mobile COVID-19 testing operation. The woman behind the movement, Dr. Stanford is a beloved and treasured member of Philadelphia, where she has dedicated years of her life serving the very community from which she came from. In January 2021, the BDCC began taking requests for the COVID-19 vaccine and will administer free vaccines on a first-come, first-served basis; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby honors and celebrates Philadelphia’s Living Legends: Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, Rev. Gregory Holston, Rev. Mark Tyler, Deputy Police Commissioner Melvin Singleton, State Representative Joanna McClinton, and the Doctors of the Black Doctors Consortium, who were the “Guiding Lights” of the year 2020 and are trailblazers and leaders in their respective fields of medicine, research, politics, religion, the justice system and community outreach, as part of the

commemoration of Black History Month.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to these Living Legends as further evidence of the sincere respect and admiration of this legislative body.