Legislation Text

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Adding Vanita Cruse to the street signs on the 7300 block of Stenton Avenue in recognition of her lifelong service to others and her advocacy in the optometry field.

WHEREAS, Born in West Philadelphia, Vanita Cruse had big dreams. Ms. Cruse learned of optometry while attending Edward W. Bok technical high school. She then went on to get her Associates Degree in optical technology and interned at the Philadelphia Vision Center at 6331 Stenton Ave. Through this work, Ms. Cruse developed a passion for helping others see. She used this love of helping others to quickly rise through the ranks and become a manager, leading a team of six. During her 40-year career, Ms. Cruse also become a huge advocate for those in the community; and

WHEREAS, While working at the Vision Center, Ms. Cruse dreamt even bigger and wanted to be the first Black female optometrist to own a practice within Philadelphia. She was not deterred later when the owner of the Vision Works where she was then working refused to sell her the practice. Fate then led her to purchase the practice where she first interned at 6331 Stenton Ave. In 1996, Ms. Cruse accomplished her goal and became the first Black optometrist to own an optometry practice in Philadelphia; she bought what had been the Philadelphia Vision Center and renamed it Genesis Optical; and

WHEREAS, The mission of her practice, Genesis Optical, was to provide quality and affordable eyecare. She targeted an area that was lacking this critical service and catered to senior citizens confined to residential living facilities. Not only did her growing practice provide direct care, her team also took the time to share information with the general community about their eyes and overall health; and

WHEREAS, As President of the Stenton Avenue/Washington Lane Business Association for over 15 years, Ms. Cruse was able to work closely with elected officials in the area, including Dwight Evans and Cherelle L. Parker. She also worked with the Ogontz Avenue Revitalization Corporation (OARC) and the Cliveden Hill Association on the Stenton Avenue revitalization project; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Cruse started a nonprofit organization, Sight For The World, where people could donate glasses to be recycled. The inspiration for the organization came after Ms. Cruse worked with a family who could not afford an eye exam and glasses. Ms. Cruse performed the exam on the family's little boy, Adam, and donated both the exam and glasses. In 2012, Sight For The World partnered with the Lyons Club to donate glasses all around the world; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Cruse gave back in many other ways. She served as a mentor and trained many Black optometrists and opticians in the city of Philadelphia. She also inspired the next generation of both Black and female business owners by leading by example; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Cruse was respected and admired by many. She was loved by her family and by the community, so much so that many often affectionally called her "Mom." Her legacy carries on through her daughter who continues to serve the community at 6331 Stenton Ave; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby adds Vanita Cruse to the street signs on the 7300 block of Stenton Avenue in recognition of her lifelong service to others and her advocacy in the optometry field.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Ms. Cruse's family as a sincere expression of the Philadelphia City Council's respect, gratitude, and recognition.