Legislation Text

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Rededicating Allen Lane in West Mt. Airy to the memory of Richard Allen, in honor of his contributions to racial justice in Philadelphia and beyond.

WHEREAS, On June 12, 2021, State Representative Christopher Rabb, Cresheim Village Neighbors, Congressperson Dwight Evans, neighbors, and constituents gathered to celebrate the reopening of the Allen Lane Bridge. This multiracial gathering strongly answered the call to disassociate the original namesake of this street, bridge, and SEPTA station in recognition of a far more stellar citizen of Philadelphia with the same surname; and

WHEREAS, The Allen Lane Bridge was originally named after William Allen, who was an enslaver, British loyalist, the 26th mayor of Philadelphia whose opposition to abolition and racial justice was widely condemned in his lifetime and that condemnation endures; and

WHEREAS, Richard Allen, on the other hand, was a champion for the Black community. He stood for truth and freedom amongst Black people and was an integral part of the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He was a man of good character and integrity, possessing qualities that we want to acknowledge and foster in our community; and

WHEREAS, Ironically, Allen was enslaved by Benjamin Chew, the namesake of Chew Avenue. Renaming the Allen Lane Bridge to Richard Allen Way will be a good first step in changing the narrative of the history that the City of Philadelphia embraces; and

WHEREAS, In Philadelphia, a City that represents American independence and freedom from unjust rule, it is essential that we uplift the voices and stories that align with our goals moving forward. Richard Allen was a powerful example of the type of person that we want to engage in our community and its development, as opposed to the offensive history that is kept alive through the current namesake of Allen Lane Bridge; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Rededicates Allen Lane in West Mt. Airy to the memory of Richard Allen, in honor of his contributions to racial justice in Philadelphia and beyond.