

Legislation Text

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Honoring the life of Jeff Guaracino Chief Executive Officer of Visit Philly, who brought the City into the national spotlight as a destination for tourism and whose work championed the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals and welcomed all to Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Jeff Guaracino was born in Philadelphia and began his career here as a young man interning for KYW-TV and CBS Radio. His first job as communications assistant at these broadcasters began his work and reputation as a passionate advocate for Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Beginning in 2018, Jeff proudly served as President and CEO of Visit Philadelphia which promotes the image and economic growth of the five-county region including most predominantly Philadelphia. He also held additional roles as a Director and Vice President of Communications from 2001 and 2012; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Guaracino was charged with drawing visitors to Philadelphia's many sites and working to strengthen its reputation as a cultural and historical world-class city to visit. Under his leadership, the hospitality industry was largely supported by his extensive advocacy and innovative marketing efforts throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and is now beginning to recover. His efforts included Philly Live Weekends, a collaboration with NBC Philadelphia; Love + Grit, a Philly podcast focused on telling authentic and diverse Philadelphia stories; and a Black- and Brown-owned business initiative that culminated in City Council declaring each Friday in December Shop Black Business Friday; and

WHEREAS, Prior to his time as CEO at Visit Philadelphia, Jeff was the Chief Executive at the nonprofit Welcome America which coordinates Philadelphia's extensive annual Fourth of July celebrations. Earlier in his career, he also served as the Director of Communications at the Franklin Institute; and

WHEREAS, It is Jeff's work as a tireless advocate for welcoming LGBTQ+ tourism to Philadelphia which defines his legacy. In 2003, Mr. Guaracino spearheaded a campaign encouraging visitors to come to Philadelphia with a commercial about a fictional gay Colonial couple meeting for a date at Carpenter's Hall. The advertisement, one of the first of its kind in the country, quipped, "Visit Philadelphia and get your history straight and your nightlife gay"; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Guaracino authored two books on tourism for gay and lesbian couples including 2007's *Gay and Lesbian Tourism: The Essential Guide to Marketing* and 2017's *Handbook of LGBT Tourism and Hospitality: A Guide for Business Practice*, which he coauthored with Ed Salvato. He wrote a travel column for the Philadelphia Gay News, and also helped found the Philadelphia chapter of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association; and

WHEREAS, Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Guaracino, cities across the world are campaigning for tourism by marketing themselves as LGBTQ+ friendly destinations. Jeff's strategies are some of the first of their kind and have had a lasting impact on the hospitality industry on a global scale; and

WHEREAS, Above all, Jeff will be remembered as one of Philadelphia's proudest residents who spent his

professional life sharing our City's greatness with other people and encouraging them to visit and see it for themselves; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, Does hereby honor the life of Jeff Guaracino Chief Executive Officer of Visit Philly, who brought the City into the national spotlight as a destination for tourism and whose work championed the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals and welcomed all to Philadelphia.