

Legislation Text

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Honoring the African American Children's Book Project on the occasion of its 30th Annual African American Children's Book Fair.

WHEREAS, Philadelphia struggles with a double-digit illiteracy rate among those 16 and older, underscoring the importance of providing children with early opportunities to learn to read, and beyond that, to develop a love of reading; and

WHEREAS, Studies show that children who read outside of school coursework tend to excel in other aspects of their lives. Book Fairs provide children with a venue to explore their curiosity and interests, and motivates children to read by offering them a wide selection of different books to browse; and

WHEREAS, The African American Children's Book Fair is celebrating its 30th Anniversary. The Book Fair is distinguished as being one of the oldest and largest single-day events for African American children's books in the country; and

WHEREAS, The African American Children's Book Fair has an average annual attendance of over 3,500 children, caregivers, and educators. Rich or poor, no one leaves empty handed, as the books themselves are priced at a level where they are more affordable, and posters, bookmarkers, and raffle books are distributed free of charge to attendees; and

WHEREAS, The African American Children's Book Fair highlights books that enlighten and empower children, and features some of the most exciting children's authors from the multicultural literary community. Its goal is not merely to get children reading, but to also foster in them a lifelong passion for the activity that enriches their lives. The event is a product of the African American Children's Book Project; and

WHEREAS, Vanesse Lloyd-Sgambati is the Founder and CEO of the African American Children's Book Project. She created the African American Children's Book Project to preserve and promote youth literature written and illustrated about African Americans. As a literary consultant, she is a much sought-after expert on trends in diverse books and how to incorporate these books into homes, schools, and libraries. She created the Book Fair because she believes that all children should have access to books that reflect their images. With the Book Fair in its 30th year, it is clear that Lloyd-Sgambati's vision continues to resonate within the Philadelphia community; and

WHEREAS, Each year to kick-off Black History Month, the African American Children's Book Project honors people in the community who open the pages of books and keep the literary flames ablaze in not only Philadelphia, but also across the country; and

WHEREAS, This annual event continues to respond to the needs of the community. The African American Children's Book Fair's audience was broadened this past year when members from all communities reached out to get a better understanding of how to teach their children about social justice issues. From the beginning, the African American Children's Book Fair understood that reading about Black History, American History, is the

ideal way to teach social justice to all children; and

WHEREAS, This year's Book Fair will highlight individuals who have made contributions to Literacy: authors Leah Henderson and Paula Chase; and

WHEREAS, Leah Henderson is an award-winning author of books for young readers, including the critically acclaimed middle grade novels *The Magic in Changing Your Stars* and *One Shadow on the Wall*. Her picture books include Junior Library Guild Selection *A Day for Rememberin'*, *Together We March*, and *Daddy Speaks Love*. Leah holds an MFA in writing and is on faculty at Spalding University's graduate writing program. Leah has mentored for many years and her volunteer work has roots in Mali, West Africa; and

WHEREAS, Paula Chase co-founded the award-winning blog *The Brown Bookshelf*. The blog was designed to highlight the myriad of Black kidlit voices, and *The Brown Bookshelf's* Annual 28 Days Later campaign draws thousands of views to under-the-radar authors and illustrators and won a 2019 Children's Book Council Diversity Award. The blog was among the first to advocate for diversity in children's literature, specifically to uplift books by African American writers and illustrators and paved the way for the growing number of websites promoting children's literature by marginalized writers. Chase is also the author of nine children's books. *So Done* (Greenwillow/HarperCollins), her critically acclaimed middle grade debut, was named a 2018 Kirkus Reviews Best Book, a Chicago Library Best of the Best Book and was a 2020-21 Louisiana Young Readers Choice nominee. *So Done* and its companions, *Dough Boys* and *Turning Point*, are blazing the trail for books that tackle tough and sometimes taboo topics for younger readers. Her latest novel, *Keeping It Real*, focuses on classism in the Black community and the impact of family secrets. Chase's five *Del Rio Bay Clique* novels helped Kensington Books launch its YA imprint in 2007; and

WHEREAS, The 2022 African American Children's Book Fair will take place on Saturday, February 26, 2022 at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, from 1PM to 4 PM, with a virtual preview on Saturday, February 5, 2022; and

WHEREAS, Council has no doubt that this year's iteration of the Book Fair will meet all the lofty expectations inspired by its history of excellence. We encourage all of our City's residents, young and old alike, to discover, for the first time or once again, the wonders to be found in the pages of a good book; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby honor the African American Children's Book Project on the Occasion of its 30th Annual African American Children's Book Fair.