



Legislation Text

File #: 220083, Version: 0

Declaring January 31 - February 4, 2022 as “National Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action” in the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, The roots of Black History Month can be traced back to 1926 with the establishment of Negro History Week and it has since grown to a commemoration recognized and celebrated throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, The Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action started in Philadelphia on January 23, 2017, and was inspired by a day of action in 2016 when educators, students, and families in Seattle came to school wearing shirts emblazoned with “Black Lives Matter: We Stand Together” and “#SayHerName”; and

WHEREAS, This 2021-2022 school year, thousands of educators from coast-to-coast who are committed to racial justice will participate in the national week of action through both virtual and in-person events. Many will wear Black Lives Matter shirts to school and teach lessons about structural racism, intersectional Black identities, Black history, and anti-racist movements; and

WHEREAS, While Schools are community pillars that should promote equity, build understanding, and facilitate active engagement in creating pathways to freedom and justice for all people, many Black educators and students still face instances of racism, discrimination, and harrassment within their school districts; and

WHEREAS, The Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action has four national demands that counter the school-to-prison pipeline system and establish inclusive academic settings and curricula: to end “zero tolerance” policies, and implement restorative justice; to hire more Black teachers; to mandate Black history and ethnic studies in the K-12 curriculum and anti-racist training for all educators in Philadelphia; and to fund more counselors and fewer school police officers; and

WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing racial and economic inequalities, and has disproportionately impacted Black communities. While educators across the Philadelphia School District have been forced to work under increasingly strenuous conditions and are experiencing high levels of burnout, Black teachers have borne the brunt of these impacts. Efforts to recruit and retain Black teachers must address the compounded adversity they experience within the District; and

WHEREAS, Research shows that the use of culturally-relevant curricula and the teaching of ethnic studies may significantly improve student attendance, grade point average, and completed credits. Research also shows that exposure to Black teachers has significant positive impacts for Black students, leading to increased student learning in math and reading, reduced discipline rates, and increased likelihood of college attendance; and

WHEREAS, Over the past year, educators across the country have stood up against efforts in over 27 states, including Pennsylvania, to restrict the teaching of the history of systemic racism in the United States, and have pledged to “Teach the Truth” about the legacies of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression; and

WHEREAS, As Paulo Freire argues, teachers do not merely deposit information into students passively. Teachers, instead, are in a liberatory dialogue with their students to rethink and reimagine the world we live in, thus engaging in a process that allows students and teachers to work together and address issues of inequality and injustice that their schools and communities face; and

WHEREAS, The week of action takes place amidst persistent efforts by teachers, students, parents, and community members to advance justice and fairness in their schools and communities. These coalitions have notably led the charge to confront cuts to school funding that disproportionately deprive Black students of essential services. Their advocacy has restored counselors and nurses in schools, reformed disciplinary codes and implemented restorative justice practices, and secured supportive services to address student and family trauma; and

WHEREAS, There are thirteen guiding principles of the Black Lives Matter movement highlighted during this week of action: restorative justice, empathy, loving engagement, diversity, globalism, queer affirming, trans affirming, collective value, intergenerationality, Black villages, unapologetically Black, and Black women. These tenets are a means of challenging the legacy of institutionalized racism and oppression that has plagued the United States since its founding; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Declares January 31 - February 4, 2022 as “National Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action” in the City of Philadelphia.