

## Legislation Text

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Honoring the life and work of Reverend Dr. Evelyn C. Graves, for her lifetime of dedication to community activism and innovation in the creative and performing arts through the founding and leadership of Evelyn Graves Ministries.

WHEREAS, Evelyn Cassandra Graves was born on July 11, 1934 in Marion, South Carolina to the late Jethro and Alice Williams; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Graves was an avid scholar, and obtained degrees from Grambling State University, Jameson Bible Institute and United Theological Seminary, where she completed doctorates in philosophy and divinity; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Graves began her lifetime of service to the communities of West and Southwest Philadelphia through her work in the communications and medical records departments at Mercy-Douglass Hospital until the doors of the hospital closed in 1973; and

WHEREAS, While employed at Mercy-Douglass, Dr. Graves opened her home 24 hours a day to offer a nurturing environment to members of her community, orchestrated bus trips to provide new experiences to participants, and provided a faith-based approach to the addressing gang violence and addiction issues in the surrounding area; and

WHEREAS, These efforts led Dr. Graves to establish Evelyn Graves Drama Productions, which sought to provide spiritual enrichment through participation in cultural arts, education and childcare; and

WHEREAS, Trinity Broadcast Network would go on to broadcast interviews with Dr. Graves and original productions by Evelyn Graves Drama Productions, including productions of “Behold the Man” chronicling the story of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ to a television viewing audience of three million homes; and

WHEREAS, Evelyn Graves Drama Productions would serve as the predecessor to 37 more faith-based community programs, including Evelyn Graves Ministries Church, Daycare Center, Pre-K-12 Academy and Summer Day Camp, all of which have provided enriching experiences to both youth and adults through a variety of cultural and performing arts programs; and

WHEREAS, Through these programs, Dr. Graves traveled and presented decades of history in the creative and performing arts that included showcases by emerging artists in 35 states and eight different countries, including South Korea, the Eastern and Western Caribbean; and

WHEREAS, In 2021, Evelyn Graves Drama Productions and Evelyn Graves Ministries church celebrated more than 50 years of history and innovation in the creative and performing arts, touting seventeen original multidisciplinary theatre pieces and original productions; and

WHEREAS, For her work as a spiritual leader and community activist, Dr. Graves received over 200

humanitarian awards, citations and acknowledgments over the course of her life, including the naming of 5400 Chester Avenue and the 1400 and 1500 blocks of South 55th Street as ‘Dr. Evelyn Graves Way’ in 2015 as recognition for decades of service to her community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby recognizes and honors the life and work of Rev. Dr. Evelyn C. Graves, for her lifetime of dedication to community activism and innovation in the creative and performing arts through the founding and leadership of Evelyn Graves Ministries.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Rev. Dr. Graves as a sincere expression of the Philadelphia City Council’s gratitude and recognition.