

Legislation Text

File #: 220537, **Version:** 0

Recognizing and honoring the 50th Anniversary of Philadelphia's first Gay Pride March as a celebration of LGBTQ+ liberation and declaring June 2022 in Philadelphia as LGBTQ+ Pride Month.

WHEREAS, The movement for LGBTQ+ liberation has a deep and righteous history in the City of Philadelphia, helmed by revolutionary leaders who demonstrated the power of organizing alongside movements for justice to advance equity and civil rights; and

WHEREAS, On June 11, 1972, thousands of people rallied in Rittenhouse Square and marched through Center City to Independence Hall in Philadelphia's first formal Gay Pride March. Wearing symbolic chains and removing metaphorical masks, some of the marchers dressed in drag and extravagant outfits as they sang "we are proud to say to all today, gay is good and proud and right"; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's early movement for gay rights was led in part by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans youth amidst targeted brutality and harassment toward the LGBTQ+ community by the Philadelphia Police Department; and

WHEREAS, Queer teenagers joined with the Janus Society in April 1965 to lead what was then one of the largest demonstrations for LGBTQ+ rights against Dewey's, a Center City restaurant, for refusing service to over 150 members of the LGBTQ+ community in a single day. Distributing flyers and organizing sit-ins, the organizers drew inspiration from the successful civil disobedience strategies used by the movement for Black civil rights, and marked one of the first intersectional coalitions of gay and gender non-conforming individuals fighting for justice for all; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia is home to one of the earliest annual demonstrations for LGBTQ+ rights, the *Annual Reminders*, led by Frank Kameny, Clark Polak, Barbara Gittings, and Kay Lahusen outside Independence Hall on July 4th from 1965 to 1969. Participants included Ernestine Eckstein, Kiyoshi Kuromiya, and Ada Bello. The silent protests enforced strict dress codes and were critiqued for emphasizing conformity to heteronormative societal norms and excluding transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, but have been credited with laying the groundwork for the June 1969 Stonewall protests; and

WHEREAS, The *Annual Reminders* protests evolved into the first LGBTQ+ Pride March in New York City when, at a meeting of the Eastern Regional Conference of Homophile Organizations in Philadelphia five months following the Stonewall protests, activists passed a resolution to move the time and location of the annual demonstration "in order to be more relevant, reach a greater number of people, and encompass the ideas and ideals of the larger struggle in which we are engaged - that of our fundamental human rights"; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia activists were deeply involved in the planning of the first Christopher Street Liberation Day march in New York City in 1970 and 1971, and in 1972, the Gay Activists Alliance, the Homophile Action League, Radicalesbians, and university groups formed the Philadelphia Gay Pride Committee, led by Jerry Curtis and Byrna Aronson, to host the first formal Gay Pride March in the City; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Gay Pride Committee wrote in June of 1972 that “until gay lovers can walk proudly hand in hand on the street without evoking hostile comments and harassment, we will continue to march and fight for our freedom and the freedom of our frightened brothers and sisters who are unhappily satisfied with the status quo;” and

WHEREAS, The 1972 Gay Pride March featured speeches from Barbara Gittings, former editor of *The Ladder*, the first national lesbian publication, and Jerry Curtis, one of the first registered lobbyists for LGBTQ+ rights, who fought to secure “the basic rights of equality, human dignity, and the opportunity to live the most productive and useful lives possible” for gay Pennsylvanians; and

WHEREAS, In the five decades since, Philadelphia has been and continues to be at the vanguard of pathbreaking advances in LGBTQ+ civil rights; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia activists Barbara Gittings, Kay Lahusen, and Dr. John Fryer were at the forefront of the successful campaign for the American Psychiatric Association to declassify homosexuality as a mental illness in the 1970s; and

WHEREAS, In 1979, hundreds of LGBTQ+ activists gathered in Philadelphia to plan the first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights - which would gather over 100,000 demonstrators on October 14, 1979; and

WHEREAS, In 1982, Philadelphia became one of the first cities in the country, and the first in Pennsylvania, to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing, employment, and public accommodations, made possible by a decade of multiracial organizing and the work of groups such as the Dyketactics! and the Philadelphia Lesbian and Gay Task Force. The ordinance was a watershed moment in Philadelphia’s movement for LGBTQ+ rights; and

WHEREAS, In 1987, Philadelphia became home to the nation’s first library dedicated to AIDS and HIV research. “In stark contrast to [the] government’s negligible response,” the library “provided information and rallied to develop social services, support research, and demand action.” HIV/AIDS, which has since taken the lives of over 8,000 Philadelphians, disproportionately affected queer people of color, emblematic of healthcare disparities which persist to this day; and

WHEREAS, In 1988, Philadelphia’s AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) was founded. Today, it remains one of the most robust ACT UPs in the country. Since its founding, ACT UP Philadelphia has led protests across the country as well as direct actions on issues from housing justice to harm reduction. It also has served as incubator for activist LGBTQ+ health and wellness organizations such as Philadelphia FIGHT; and

WHEREAS, In 2008, Philadelphia established one of the first municipal Offices of LGBT Affairs, first directed by the visionary leader Gloria Casarez. Under Casarez, the City of Philadelphia adopted among the strongest protections for LGBTQ+ communities in the country, including significant expansions for transgender and gender non-confirming individuals; and

WHEREAS, In June of 2017, the Office of LGBT Affairs unveiled an updated version of the rainbow Pride flag, incorporating Black and Brown to affirm the importance and significance of diversity in LGBTQ+ spaces following powerful community organizing against discrimination and for inclusion; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia’s LGBTQ+ community and history are directly tied to transformative LGBTQ+

resource centers, including the William Way LGBT Community Center, which empowers and serves the city's LGBTQ+ community through "arts & culture, empowerment, and community connections," the Mazzoni Center, a pioneering sexual wellness center that was among the first responders to the HIV pandemic and sponsor of the world-renowned Trans Wellness Conference, GALAEI, a radical social justice organization committed to "empowerment and economic development for all Queer and Trans, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color," and the Attic Youth Center, one of the nation's largest community centers committed to serving LGBTQ+ youth; and

WHEREAS, On June 5, 2022, the newly formed PHL Pride Collective will join with the Philly Dyke March to mark this fiftieth anniversary with "PHL Pride 50: Our Community, Our Joy," including a march that returns to Independence Hall, site of the *Annual Reminders* pickets and the final stop on the 1972 Pride March; and

WHEREAS, The PHL Pride Collective seeks to build a new, radical, and inclusive version of Pride that "centers Black and Brown queer and trans communities." The Collective was founded on clear "Principles of Unity" that emphasize local community partners over corporate sponsors, prioritizes accessibility across ability and languages, ensures that Pride reflects the demography of Philadelphia, operates from a harm-reduction framework, explicitly includes "Trans people, Fat people, immigrants, Muslim folks, people who are HIV+, [and] Black women/femmes," and incorporates Queer and Trans forms of arts and culture like drag and ballroom; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia recognizes that visibility without meaningful structural reform is neither sufficient nor enough, and that until equality is fully realized for all members of the community, the fight for LGBTQ+ rights is not over; and

WHEREAS, The fight for equality for all LGBTQ+ Philadelphians is intersectional and deeply connected to movements for racial justice. Racism and the erasure of experiences from queer people of color persist to this day, and the inclusion of these perspectives must be prioritized and centered in celebrations of LGBTQ+ pride; and

WHEREAS, The need to stand in defense of LGBTQ+ lives remains increasingly critical, particularly in light of hateful legislation introduced to restrict healthcare and autonomy from Trans youth and seeks to erase LGBTQ+ experiences from classrooms and curricula; and

WHEREAS, Pride is a space for righteous joy and for the LGBTQ+ community to express and explore the fullness of their identities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Recognizes and honors the 50th Anniversary of Philadelphia's first Gay Pride March as a celebration of LGBTQ+ liberation, and declares June 2022 in Philadelphia as LGBTQ+ Pride Month.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy be presented to John Anderies, Director of the John J. Wilcox, Jr Archives at the William Way LGBT Community Center, further evidencing the sincere respect and admiration of this legislative body.