

Legislation Text

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Calling on the City of Philadelphia to establish a committee to plan and host athletic events for Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Philadelphia, with the goal of establishing an annual, Philadelphia-based HBCU Classic.

WHEREAS, HBCU Classic football is an important athletic and community tradition that dates back over a century. The first use of the term “Classic” to describe a football game between two HBCUs came during the 1919 Thanksgiving Day game between Howard University and Lincoln University, and the tradition was firmly established among HBCUs by the end of the 1920s. More recently, HBCUs have also adopted the “Classic” moniker to describe marquee basketball games, such as the NBA HBCU Classic, inaugurated in 2021; and

WHEREAS, HBCU Classics not only provide an important platform to showcase players’ athletic talents. They are also a weekend-long celebration for the whole community that offer students, alumni, and fans the opportunity to gather together while enjoying the bands, parades, and cookouts that make HBCU Classics a unique athletic tradition; and

WHEREAS, In 1921, Philadelphia first hosted the Howard and Lincoln teams’ Classic on Thanksgiving Day. The annual match-up between Howard and Lincoln was described at the time as “the classic of classics,” and the event fostered a sense of civic pride among the prominent African American communities in Philadelphia and Washington D.C. that attended to support their universities’ teams; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia has established itself as a premier city for hosting major athletic and cultural events. The Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau (PHLCVB) has helped to secure Philadelphia’s role as a host city for the annual Army-Navy football game and has led the City’s efforts to host games during the 2026 FIFA World Cup, as well as the future 2031 Men’s Rugby World Cup and 2033 Women’s Rugby World Cup. The City is also proud to host annual arts and culture events such as Wawa Welcome America, the Made in America Festival, and the Roots Picnic, each with the support of PHLCVB and Visit Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia is an ideal city to host an annual HBCU Classic, and it could host both football and basketball competitions during the course of a weekend-long celebration of HBCUs’ important athletic and cultural heritage. An annual HBCU Classic would provide the City’s residents with an opportunity to showcase their civic pride and to partake in the rich cultural experience that surrounds these annual events. And the City’s tourism industry would benefit greatly from the influx of students, alumni, and fans who will travel to support their teams and partake in the events’ festivities; and

WHEREAS, PHLCVB, Visit Philadelphia, and their partners in the Mayor’s Office have been instrumental in fostering successful public-private partnerships to support major athletic and cultural events in Philadelphia. A Philadelphia-based HBCU Classic presents a valuable new opportunity to build upon our City’s reputation as a premier host for national events while celebrating our City’s rich community of HBCU students, alumni, and supporters; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Council hereby calls on the

City of Philadelphia to establish a committee to plan and host athletic events for Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Philadelphia, with the goal of establishing an annual, Philadelphia-based HBCU Classic.