

Legislation Text

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Recognizing and honoring the Philadelphia High School for Girls on its Demisemiseptcentennial Anniversary - 175 years of academic excellence.

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia High School for Girls was founded on February 1, 1848. The Philadelphia High School for Girls, a college preparatory school for academically talented young women in Philadelphia, was founded in 1848 to “*prepare teachers for the common schools of Philadelphia.*” It was the first municipally funded high school for girls in the United States. The school’s mission as founded is to prepare students to treat others compassionately and lead lives of personal integrity at the university level, preparing them to be future leaders; and

WHEREAS, From its very beginning, Girls’ High played a leading role in the dramatic changes in women’s lifestyles that began in this country in 1848, the year in which the school opened and the same year of the first Women’s Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, New York. The school proved to be a beacon of light in the bleak picture of women’s lives at that time. Founded initially to train women teachers, the school program was soon expanded to provide full academic training; and offered three distinct curricula, classical liberal arts training, business training, and scientific training for careers in medicine; and

WHEREAS, Girls’ High has never ceased providing the best education possible for all of the young women who filled its classrooms and earned their right to teach and aim for higher education. From the earliest days in its unique history, the school has been the launching pad for great women achievers who influenced and enhanced the history and culture of the United States. In addition, from the school’s inception, the ideals and spirit of the school have fostered lifelong sisterhood and friendship among its graduates; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia High School for Girls is known for its definitive history educating women who contribute to the community, state, nation, and world in many fields, including government, science, arts, business, and education. The alumnae include women who have broken glass ceilings, such as: Meta Vaux Warwick Fuller (1895), poet, painter, theater designer, and sculptor and the first African American to receive a federal art commission; Jessie Redmon Fauset (1900), poet, author, editor, and the godmother of the Harlem Renaissance; Pauline Oberdorfer Minor (1910), singer and composer, founding member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated; Pinkie Gordon Lane (June 1940), the first African-American poet laureate of Louisiana; The Right Reverend Barbara Clementine Harris (June 1948) was the first woman ordained a bishop of the Episcopal Church; Constance Clayton (January 1952), the first woman and African American to lead the Philadelphia Public School system; Gloria Allred (June 1959), noted women’s rights attorney; Judith Rodin (January 1962), the first woman President of the University of Pennsylvania and former President of the Rockefeller Foundation; Karen Hastie Williams (June 1962), the first African-American woman to clerk for the Supreme Court; Shirley Clarke Franklin (January 1963), the first woman mayor of Atlanta, GA, and first woman elected mayor of any Southern city; Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell (January 1965), former President of Spelman College; Blondell Reynolds Brown (1970), the only woman to serve At-Large in City Council from 1999-2015; Jonelle Procope (June 1988), former President and CEO of the Apollo Theater; Erika Alexander (1987), actress, writer, producer, entrepreneur, and activist; Jill Scott (June 1990), award-winning singer, songwriter, and actress; Katherine Gilmore Richardson (2001), youngest Black woman elected to Philadelphia

City Council; Nicole Jordan (2001), the first African American to be named Librarian of a philharmonic orchestra; and Princess Garrett (2014), writer, documentarian, winner of the 2019 Student Academy Award for her short film Sankofa; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby recognize and honor the Philadelphia High School for Girls on its 175th Anniversary.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the Philadelphia High School for Girls as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.