

Legislation Text

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Honoring the Wonderful Women of West and Southwest Philadelphia, on the occasion of International Women's Day, for their tireless work to uplift West and Southwest Philadelphians: Tanja Carter, Callalily Cousar, Constance Harris Crews, Terrilyn Donnell, Bettye Ferguson, Rachel Honore, Cheryl Jackson, Edie Owens-Hightower, Tammy Pullins, Tamara N. Staley, Lorraine Thomas, Kendra Van de Water, Doreen Waller, Mariya Khandros, Cydnea Shearlds, Esq., Alexis Wright-Whitley, Ciani Beatty, Kianna Bingham, Tyler Wood, and Morgan Allgrove-Hodges.

WHEREAS, Tanja Carter has been a community activist in Mill Creek, where she has spent the majority of her life, for over a decade. Tanja Carter is the founder of It Takes a Village of Helping Hands, whose mission is to impact, improve, and empower neighbors by hosting events, beautifying alleys, city streets, and parks, and more. She also serves her community as a Block Captain, and is very happy to be able to give back to the community that has given her so much joy and love, and to be known as a woman who cares for her neighbors; and

WHEREAS, Callalily Cousar was born in 1929 and has been serving her neighbors ever since. Callalily Cousar serves as the President of the East Parkside Residence Assistance (ERPA), and in this capacity has established a playground, created a food cupboard, hosted block parties, health fairs, Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners, and tax and resume workshops. Callalily Cousar's greatest passion is children, for whom she works tirelessly. Through the EPRA, Callalily Cousar exposes young people in her community to things they would not otherwise experience such as baseball games, hayrides, Black museums, and Underground Railroad sites. East Parkside owes Callalily Cousar a debt of gratitude for almost a century of service to the community; and

WHEREAS, Constance Harris Crews is the President of the Kingessing Recreation Center Advisory Council, a Block Captain, a Committeeperson, the Co-Commissioner of the Jayhawks Basketball Program, and the Program Liaison for the Jayhawks 1975 Youth Association. Through the Jayhawks 1975 Youth Association, she goes above and beyond to put young people on a path to success, especially by helping them reach college and attend loan-free. Constance Crews and her organization prepare youth to have high self-esteem, be confident, feel proud of who they are, believe in the decisions they make, and take responsibility for their actions. A resident and community leader for almost 60 years, Kingessing's young people could not ask for a more compassionate or devoted mentor than Constance Harris Crews; and

WHEREAS, Terrilyn Donnell serves her neighbors as the Executive Director of Community of Compassion CDC, and Chief of Staff at the Church of Christian Compassion. Community of Compassion CDC operates a community evening resource center for young people, keeping them out of harm's way by giving them a safe place to go at night. Since opening in 2021 this center has served over 450 youth between the hours of 7pm and 2am. During these hours, Terrilyn Donnell puts Cobbs Creek's young people on a path to success by exposing them to important skills and activities like drone piloting, building, and programming - which are proven to get kids interested in science, technology, engineering, and math. Thanks to Terrilyn Donnell's leadership, many of Cobbs Creek's young people will have the skills they need to thrive in school and beyond; and

WHEREAS, Bettye Ferguson is the President of the Belmont Alliance Civic Association CDC (BACA-CDC),

which serves no and low-income youth and their families who need a little extra help. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic Bettye Ferguson's organization distributed food, diapers, personal care items, clothes, strollers, car seats, toys, books, and much more. Under Bettye Ferguson's leadership, the BACA-CDC supports 125 babies each month, and 85 seniors each week. Bettye Ferguson has continued her extraordinary work on behalf of the Belmont community by building the "Belmont Commons", a cultural activities park for all ages; and

WHEREAS, Rachel Honore's challenges navigating resources critical to the success of her special needs son inspired her to create her organization, Literacy and More. Under Rachel Honore's leadership, Literacy and More acts as a channel of communication between quality resources and the families that need them. For example, Rachel has assisted other parents as they navigate the complex system of finding and applying to quality education centers, with the goal of providing children the social, emotional, and literacy skills they need to succeed. During a time when the city continues to lag in literacy, Rachel Honore's efforts to ensure West Philadelphia's young people have the tools they need to thrive in the classroom could not be more beneficial; and

WHEREAS, Edie Owens-Hightower uplifts Kingsessing through her organization Partners for Success. Partners for Success builds relationships that give people hope and lets them know that they are loved. Edie Owens-Hightower hosts events for every holiday, as well as for "back to school" and other key milestones in the neighborhood. Edie Owens-Hightower is especially proud of her bike maintenance classes and giveaways, because "Partners for Success does not wait for Christmas Day to give Kingsessing's young people the items they need to thrive and feel loved". Edie Owens-Hightower's affection for Kingsessing is evident in everything she does, whether it's through Partners for Success or her work as a member of the Kingsessing Recreation Center Advisory Board and as a Committeeperson for the 2nd Division in the 51st Ward; and

WHEREAS, Cheryl Jackson leads the Concerned Block Captains of West and Southwest Philadelphia, which keeps residents informed of challenges facing their communities such as crime, blight, food insecurities, healthcare issues, and more. Cheryl Jackson also provides resources to improve the lives of those dealing with physical and mental health challenges and bridges the gap between the City and neighbors. Cheryl Jackson is also a member of Philadelphia More Beautiful, which works with City Departments like the Community Life Improvement Program (CLIP) and the Streets and Walkways Education and Enforcement Program (SWEEP) to beautify neighborhoods. Cheryl Jackson exemplifies the power concerned citizens have to effect change in their communities. West and Southwest Philadelphians are eternally grateful for her service; and

WHEREAS, Tammy Pullins is the Executive Director of Bread for Life, a ministry of the Transfiguration Baptist Church that provides thousands of hot meals each year to residents in Mantua. Growing up in the community, Tammy Pullins learned that the food insecurity experienced by residents in food deserts like Mantua has far-reaching effects on health, education, and mental health. Tammy Pullins believes hot meals have the power bring neighbors together by giving everyone a seat at the table, allowing residents to build relationships and share ideas and concerns. Tammy Pullins' determination to provide all her needy neighbors with a hot meal continues Mantua rich history as a community of neighbors helping neighbors; and

WHEREAS, Tamara N. Staley arrived in Philadelphia in 1962 and began her story of triumph and success as a community activist. Capitalizing on her years of management experience Tamara has produced Black History events that attract 10,000+ attendees and build community across the African diaspora community in West and Southwest Philadelphia. As the President and CEO of the Philadelphia Juneteenth Family Inc., Tamara Staley brings people together to acknowledge and honor Black History in Philadelphia and the United States. West and Southwest Philadelphia could not ask for a better community builder; and

WHEREAS, Lorraine Thomas has overseen daily operations for all of Southwest CDC's programming since 2011. With Lorraine as a main driver, Southwest CDC provides neighbors with vital services including housing counseling, energy assistance, workforce development, neighborhood revitalization, and afterschool programming. Affectionally described as the "Mayor of Southwest Philadelphia", Lorraine Thomas is a unifier. Whether it's a kind gesture, a piece of advice, or a connection to a resource, Lorraine Thomas has been a go-to person for many residents and other stakeholders in Southwest Philadelphia. Also serving as a Committeeperson for the 8th Division in the 51st Ward, and on the Neighborhood Advisory Subcommittee, Lorraine Thomas is a collaborative leader with a passion for making Southwest Philadelphia a safer, cleaner, and thriving place for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, Kendra Van de Water leads Youth Empowerment for Advancement Hangout (YEAH Philly) as their Executive Director. YEAH Philly creates safe and authentic hangout spaces for teens and young adults in West and Southwest Philly who are directly impacted by violence. Kendra Van de Water disrupts the cycle of violence through teen-led peer mediation and conflict resolution, community engagement, and economic opportunities. During a time when gun violence disproportionately impacts West and Southwest Philadelphia communities, young people need community leaders like Kendra Van de Water to give them the support and love they deserve. Kendra Van de Water's unparalleled impact is evident in the 400 young people she helps annually, as well as YEAH's \$750,000+ investment in the community; and

WHEREAS, Doreen Waller fiercely believes Kingsessing deserves the same goods, services, and economic development as Center City. And since the early 1990s, Ms. Waller has worked to realize this goal. Doreen Waller's activism began when she banded together with 5 other women, who named themselves the "vigilante grannies", in the 1990s to keep children safe by patrolling the area outside Longstreet School. She also created the Garden of Unity at 56th and Chester, which has won awards from the Philadelphia Horticultural Society. Each year brings a new project for Ms. Waller, whose commitment to her neighbors has not waived once during the past 30 years. Presently, Doreen Waller is working to get better street lighting in Kingsessing, holding local politicians accountable, and ensuring PHA begins much-needed renovations to Bartram's Village. An incredibly humble person, Doreen Waller is living proof to her neighbors that they can get things done as long as they preserve; and

WHEREAS, The Third District Council Office has mighty team of women as its engine. West and Southwest Philadelphia are fortunate to have Mariya Khandros, Cydnea Shearlds, Esq., Alexis Wright-Whitley, Ciani Beatty, Kianna Bingham, Tyler Wood, and Morgan Allgrove-Hodges as their City Council staff. Councilmember Jamie Gauthier's work on behalf of her constituents would be impossible without the unwavering commitment and tireless efforts of these passionate public servants. Not only do the women of the Third District Council Office strive to make the smooth operation of City Council, and subsequently the City of Philadelphia, possible, they amplify the work of the thirteen community activists honored in this resolution by bridging the gap between City Hall and city streets; and

WHEREAS, During a time when West and Southwest Philadelphia endure a disproportionate amount of gun violence, housing insecurity, and poverty, the activism and work of the aforementioned women, as well as countless other unsung female heroes across West and Southwest Philadelphia, could not be more important. These women deserve to be recognized for their contributions to the Third Council District and the City of Philadelphia; now, therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, BY THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it honors the Wonderful Women of West and Southwest Philadelphia, on the occasion of International Women's Day, for their tireless work to uplift West and Southwest Philadelphians: Tanja Carter, Callalily Cousar, Constance Harris Crews, Terrilyn Donnell,

Bettye Ferguson, Rachel Honore, Cheryl Jackson, Edie Owens-Hightower, Tammy Pullins, Tamara N. Staley, Lorraine Thomas, Kendra Van de Water, Doreen Waller, Mariya Khandros, Cydnea Shearlds, Esq., Alexis Wright-Whitley, Ciani Beatty, Kianna Bingham, Tyler Wood, and Morgan Allgrove-Hodges.