

Legislation Text

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Honoring and recognizing Uhuru Furniture & Collectibles and the African People's Education & Defense Fund for defending the rights of the African community; providing affordable furniture and home goods to Philadelphians; providing jobs, job training, and volunteer opportunities; and committing all profits to supporting economic development and self-determination programs for Black communities across the country.

WHEREAS, Uhuru Furniture & Collectibles, located at Broad and Parrish Streets in North Philadelphia, is a Black-owned business that has operated since 1994 reselling affordable furniture and household goods, providing free furniture donation pick-up services, and providing moving services to Philadelphians. Through its work, Uhuru Furniture has saved thousands of tons of furniture from landfills, helped furnish the homes of thousands of Philadelphians, and provided volunteer opportunities, job training, and work experience to its community; and

WHEREAS, For years, Uhuru Furniture has been a mainstay resource for thousands of Philadelphians and was voted "Best Home Furnishing Store in Philly" multiple times by local Channel 17 viewers. After 29 years in business, Uhuru Furniture will be closing its Philadelphia location on October 31st, 2023; and

WHEREAS, Uhuru Furniture has served Philadelphia as an economic development institution of the civil rights nonprofit the African People's Education & Defense Fund (APEDF), which strives to develop and institutionalize programs that defend the human and civil rights of the African community and address the disparities in education, health, health care, and economic development in the African community; and

WHEREAS, Since 1994, the APEDF has established institutions and programs that put African people in control of their own community life. By building institutions that put economic, political, and cultural power in the hands of the community, the APEDF seeks to combat the colonial conditions that challenge their people's ability to clothe, feed, and house themselves; and

WHEREAS, Through on-the-ground institutions like Uhuru Furniture, the APEDF has shown what self-determination for the African community looks like. It is a monumental victory and testament that Uhuru Furniture has succeeded for three decades through conditions that normally keep Black-owned institutions out of the economic arena; and

WHEREAS, Uhuru Furniture has been instrumental in supporting the creation and growth of other APEDF initiatives that continue to enact the APEDF mission. The Black Power Blueprint programs in St. Louis, MO continues to expand, contributing an African Farmer's Market and community garden, a community basketball court, a doula training program, and a women's health center to the North St. Louis Black community; and

WHEREAS, Under the slogan "Our Labor, Our Future", the APEDF is launching a new initiative, the African Independence Workforce Program (AIWP), that aims to reverse the negative economic impact of the colonial economy and the prison system. AIWP will train members of the African community, in particular formerly incarcerated members, to contribute to a prosperous future through the development of an independent liberated economy; and

WHEREAS, The AIWP emerges from the real, material need to reverse the impact of the past 40 years of mass incarceration that has torn apart families, left African communities impoverished, and left families without fathers, sons, mothers, daughters, sisters, and brothers. The AIWP seeks to receive brothers and sisters back into communities and reverse the damage done by the prison system that has been used as a colonial tool against African families; and

WHEREAS, Uhuru Furniture is one of a network of initiatives that have contributed toward the creation of the AIWP and the enactment of its mission. AIWP now serves to create opportunities for formerly incarcerated African men and women, alongside all its community members, to receive training, gain employment, and become stakeholders in a prosperous economy; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia recognizes the powerful work of Uhuru Furniture, the African People's Education & Defense Fund, and the African Independence Workforce Program. In particular, we recognize and commemorate Uhuru Furniture's impact on Philadelphia, as a small Black-owned business dedicated to economic development and self-determination for its community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Honors and recognizes Uhuru Furniture & Collectibles and the African People's Education & Defense Fund for defending the rights of the African community; providing affordable furniture and home goods to Philadelphians; providing jobs, job training, and volunteer opportunities; and committing all profits to supporting economic development and self-determination programs for the Black community across the country.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the African People's Education & Defense Fund's Board President Ona Zene' Yeshitela, as evidence of the respect and recognition given by this legislative body.