



City of Philadelphia

City Council
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Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Celebrating the Life and Honoring the Memory of Trailblazing Physician, Researcher, and Humanitarian, Dr. Edith Peterson Mitchell.

WHEREAS, Dr. Edith Mitchell was a retired Brigadier General of the United States Air Force and an oncologist who shattered racial and gender barriers, influenced the lives and careers of countless individuals, and left a legacy of excellence in medicine, academia, and human rights; and

WHEREAS, Born in 1948, young Edith was raised in Brownsville, Tennessee during widespread racial segregation in the United States, and as she grew older, she became increasingly aware that the medical care that she and her family could access was inferior to the better-resourced facilities reserved for white people; and

WHEREAS, As a young adult with an eye toward correcting this injustice, Dr. Mitchell earned a bachelor's degree in biochemistry from Tennessee State University, then joined the United States Air Force while attending Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, where she was the only Black female enrolled; and

WHEREAS, During her college years, Edith also became a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., heralding a lifetime of service with pride and distinction alongside her sisters, including as an active, longtime member of Omega Omega Chapter, the oldest and largest of AKA's graduate chapters. She was also a member of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Links, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, After completing her internship and residency in internal medicine at Meharry Medical College and working at Andrews Air Force Base as a hematologist, Dr. Mitchell joined the faculty of the University of Missouri, which in 1991 honored her with its Distinguished Service Award; and

WHEREAS, In 1993, in the wake of widespread flooding in Missouri and Mississippi, Dr. Mitchell led a team of microbiologists in averting a public health crisis by providing safe drinking water and hepatitis vaccinations, leading to her appointment as Missouri Surgeon General; and

WHEREAS, In the Air Force, Dr. Mitchell established a health program for women in the armed forces and played a key role in clarifying and updating guidelines for transporting sick and wounded soldiers in military aircraft, leading to her promotion to Brigadier General - a rank never before achieved by an African American female in the Missouri Air National Guard; and

WHEREAS, After retiring from the Air Force, Dr. Mitchell joined the medicine and medical oncology faculty at Thomas Jefferson University and became Associate Director of Diversity Programs at the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Jefferson, where she researched pancreatic cancer treatments, combined modality therapy, and patient selection criteria; and

WHEREAS, In 2009, Dr. Mitchell received the American Cancer Society's Cancer Control Award for her research on pancreatic and colorectal cancers, and was recognized with the National Medical Association

(“NMA”) Council on Concerns of Women Physicians Pfizer Research Award. She was also named ‘2010 Physician of the Year’ by CancerCare and ‘2011 Practitioner of the Year’ by the Philadelphia County Medical Society; and

WHEREAS, In 2012, Dr. Mitchell established the Center to Eliminate Cancer Disparities within the Kimmel Cancer Center at Jefferson, and the American Society of Clinical Oncology recognized her with its Humanitarian Award for providing patient care “through innovative means or exceptional service or leadership in the United States or abroad;” and

WHEREAS, In 2015, Dr. Mitchell was appointed President of the NMA for a one-year term, and she was also named one of the most influential African Americans in the United States by *Ebony* magazine. That fall, she gave a presentation on improving health outcomes for Black people at the Congressional Black Caucus’s legislative conference; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, Dr. Mitchell was one of 28 cancer expert panelists chosen by then-Vice President Joseph R. Biden for his Cancer Moonshot Initiative; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Mitchell was the recipient of Jefferson’s 2018 Achievement Award in Medicine for her contributions to science and humanity, and later became the first Black woman to receive the PHL Life Sciences Ultimate Solution Award. She also served as Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of the National Medical Association* and as a member of the National Institutes of Health’s Council on Councils; and

WHEREAS, Over the course of her lifetime of distinguished practice and service, Dr. Mitchell stood as an inspiration to countless individuals whose lives and careers she influenced. It is fitting that this Council celebrate her and acknowledge her rightful place in the annals of Black history in the United States: now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby celebrate the life and honor the memory of trailblazing physician, researcher, and humanitarian, Dr. Edith Peterson Mitchell.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Dr. Edith P. Mitchell as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.