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Recognizing the month of September as National Literacy Month and strengthening Philadelphia's commitment to literacy and digital literacy for all residents.

WHEREAS, National Literacy Month is observed annually to underscore the fundamental importance of reading, writing, and digital literacy skills for individuals of all ages, serving as a foundation for educational achievement, workforce readiness, civic participation, and everyday life; and

WHEREAS, Literacy extends far beyond school success; it enables people to interpret signs, labels, medical instructions, and legal documents, communicate effectively, access technology, and engage fully with society; and

WHEREAS, The history of literacy in the United States reflects a long-standing commitment to universal education, beginning with early colonial laws such as Massachusetts's 1642 and Connecticut's 1650 statutes requiring all residents including servants and apprentices to be taught to read, establishing a precedent for formalized education; and

WHEREAS, The expansion of public education during the Industrial Revolution and the passage of federal education initiatives throughout the 20th century reinforced literacy as a national priority, while reforms in the 2000s further addressed the needs of immigrant communities and English language learners; and

WHEREAS, The modern economy demands advanced literacy and digital skills, with entry-level positions increasingly requiring workers to read, write, interpret digital content, and navigate complex information systems skills that are vital for individual economic mobility and the City's competitiveness; and

WHEREAS, According to the 2019 National Center for Educational Statistics report, approximately 4.1% of U.S. adults are functionally illiterate unable to perform basic reading and writing tasks necessary for day-to-day activities demonstrating a persistent and urgent challenge that requires sustained and coordinated action at all government levels; and

WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania Department of Education reported that 71% of fourth graders in Philadelphia are not reading at grade level, indicating that a student's reading ability is below the expected standard for their current grade.; and

WHEREAS, Literacy disparities are closely linked to broader social inequities, including gender, race, socioeconomic status, and access to early education; women face unique barriers as illiteracy limits employment options and diminishes their roles in family decision-making and economic stability; and

WHEREAS, Students who fail to achieve reading proficiency by third grade are significantly more likely to drop out of school, perpetuating cycles of poverty and limiting lifelong opportunities, while children of parents with low literacy skills often enter school less prepared, exacerbating achievement gaps; and

WHEREAS, In light of these educational disparities, it is essential to invest in community-based support systems including public libraries, schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and government agencies to foster a citywide ecosystem for literacy development that encompasses early childhood education, K-12 instruction, adult education, workforce training, and lifelong learning; and

WHEREAS, Investment in comprehensive literacy initiatives promotes educational equity, enhances quality of life, reduces poverty, fosters social inclusion, and drives sustainable economic growth throughout the City and beyond; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby recognizes the vital contributions of educators, librarians, literacy advocates, community leaders, and volunteers who work tirelessly to improve literacy and digital literacy across the City. The Council urges all residents to celebrate National Literacy Month by supporting literacy programs, promoting lifelong learning, and ensuring every individual has the opportunity to read, write, and thrive in today's information-driven society.

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