



Legislation Text

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To honor and congratulate Catherine Willis on being the 2020 Harrison M. Sayre Award Recipient

WHEREAS, a passionate advocate for enriching lives through education, Catherine Willis' love for community radiates through her enduring service to it. As a Columbus City Schools teacher, Mrs. Willis dedicated her career to instilling knowledge and developing students to become lifelong learners. Nearly 50 years ago, she co-founded Friends of Art for Community Enrichment (F.A.C.E.) to introduce children to the art and culture of Africa and African Americans. Among its activities, F.A.C.E. presents local, regional and national artist' work, encourages participation in intergenerational art activities, and furthers awareness and understanding of the African American culture through artistic portrayals of community experiences; and

WHEREAS, since 1987, Mrs. Willis has served as part of the Helen Jenkins Scholarship Fund Lunch Bunch, which awards scholarships to Black CCS graduating seniors who demonstrate high scholastic and ethical standards. Mrs. Willis and a colleague developed the fund to recognize Helen Jenkins Davis, who led the desegregation of CCS and committed her professional life as an educator to mentoring and motivating underprivileged and at-risk Black students.; and

WHEREAS, in her retirement, Mrs. Willis continues to advocate for children through her volunteer work. In 2007, she founded Urban Strings, an organization dedicated to supporting underserved minority youth in playing string instruments. Since its founding, the group has grown from just a few young people to more than 50. In 2019, the Columbus Symphony Orchestra recognized the success of the organization and Mr. Willis' role in it by awarding her its Music educator Award; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Willis' commitment to the young people of our community is further seen through her 30 years of service on the board of the Columbus Youth Foundation (CYF). CYF improves the lives of youth from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods by providing healthy, positive opportunities to learn life lessons through recreation and sports; and

WHEREAS, in all the ways and more Mrs. Willis exemplifies the spirit of Harrison M. Sayre, leaving little doubt of her commitment to the betterment of Columbus' young people and our collective future; now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS: That this council hereby honor and congratulate Catherine Willis on being the 2020 Harrison M, Sayre Award Recipient