



Text File

Introduced: 8/22/2022

Bill No: 2022-0673, **Version:** 1

Committee: City Council

Status: Adopted

WHEREAS, Paul Anthony Ellis, Jr. is a longtime resident of the Historic Hill District, a Pennsylvania-licensed Attorney, and nephew of the late American Playwright, August Wilson, with a long history of civil rights and community advocacy, especially for residents of the Historic Hill District; and,

WHEREAS, Ellis served as President of the Homer S. Brown Association from 2005-2007 and “showcased exemplary service” for this minority bar association, a division of the Allegheny Bar Association, and provided Pro Bono legal services in his representation of a large segment of the Hill District during residents' storied and diligent quest for a Community Benefits Agreement and Hill District Master Plan between 2005 and 2008; and,

WHEREAS, Ellis and his Uncle, August Wilson, had discussions about creating an active artist space and not a house museum, to be beneficial to the community, before his passing in 2005; and,

WHEREAS, in February 2010, Ellis received the History Maker Award from the City of Pittsburgh in the Area of Community Action, for his consistent advocacy and volunteer work on behalf of local residents; and,

WHEREAS, between 2006 and 2022, Ellis provided well over a decade of volunteer service to the August Wilson House; and,

WHEREAS, in 2010 Ellis received a notice of condemnation from the City of Pittsburgh for the demolition of what would become the August Wilson House, which prompted his efforts to preserve the boyhood home of August Wilson and also the girlhood home of his mother, Freda C. Ellis; and,

WHEREAS, in September of 2008, the Daisy Wilson Artist Community was created and named after Ellis' maternal grandmother, Daisy Wilson, and inspired by his sister Kimberly's attendance at the Artist Communities Conference at Carnegie Mellon University; and,

WHEREAS, Freda C. Ellis, elder sister to August Wilson and Mother to both Paul and Kimberly, was an original Board Member and recommended McAuley Ministries in 2010, resulting in Ellis' receipt of an emergency stabilization grant and another from the Heinz Endowments in 2011; and,

WHEREAS, Ellis and the August Wilson House Board created the August Wilson Birthday Block Party in 2016 to celebrate Wilson's birthday (April 27) and centered the celebration within the Historic Hill District Community, which rebranded the neighborhood from negative media coverage, facilitated business owners' engagement in personal and professional development, increased their business profile, expanded the consumer base, and increased commerce of local, small businesses and artists; and,

WHEREAS, Ellis and his sister Kimberly provided Denzel Washington with both a tour of the then-dilapidated

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August Wilson House and a complete neighborhood tour of the Historic Hill District. Ellis' passion, organizational leadership and perseverance over the course of a decade inspired Denzel Washington to invest in the August Wilson House and to commit to raising funds for its restoration in 2018, resulting in the \$5 million dollar Capital Sponsorship of the August Wilson House from Pauletta and Denzel Washington, Oprah Winfrey, Samuel and LaTanya Jackson, Tyler Perry, Shonda Rhimes, Laurence Fishburne, Antoine Fuqua and John McClain, which allowed for the construction, renovation and Grand Opening of the August Wilson House on Saturday, August 13, 2022;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh does hereby declare August 13, 2022 to be ***“Paul Anthony Ellis, Jr. Day”*** in the City of Pittsburgh.