



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Council President Rawlings Blake

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
A Tribute to Walter Sondheim Jr. - Baltimore City's Renaissance Man

FOR the purpose of expressing our deep appreciation for the contributions of the father of modern Baltimore, Walter Sondheim Jr., for his dedication as a champion for Baltimore's downtown renaissance, his tireless efforts to desegregate Baltimore City schools, for being a leader with vision and determination who helped build Baltimore into the great City that it has become, for helping to bring social and economic prosperity to the city of Baltimore, and for showing us all, by example, that with an optimistic outlook, we can all work together to achieve great things.

Recitals

Baltimore City lost one the most influential architects of downtown development in the passing of Walter Sondheim Jr., on February 15, 2007. Mr. Sondheim, who was 98, was born in Bolton Hill, served in the Navy during World War II, and was the president of the Baltimore School Board in the 1950's that made the decision to desegregate an engineering course at Polytechnic Institute 2 years before there was mandated desegregation at public schools across the country. After the Supreme Court's desegregation decision, Sondheim and the school board moved as quickly as possible to become the first district south of the Mason-Dixon line to comply with the order.

Mr. Sondheim was an early member of the Greater Baltimore Committee. While on the Committee, he pushed for projects such as Charles Center, the Maryland Science Center, and the Inner Harbor, which helped bring life back to an industrial city that was beginning to fade away. In 1957, he was named head of the Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Authority, which brought together a number of agencies and handled the City's public housing program. It was this position that started Mr. Sondheim on his path to developing Baltimore to its full potential.

Walter Sondheim Jr., served on the board of the Baltimore Urban League during the 1930's. In his work as a retailer, Mr. Sondheim worked to fight against discrimination by helping to change the rules in Hochschild, Kohn, where he was a store manager for many years. He felt that every customer who walked into his store should be treated equally, even at a time in history where this was simply not the norm. He was an aggressive soldier for equal rights and felt that if societal standards were not just, then they should be changed.

Mr. Sondheim chaired a number of wide-ranging boards over his long career, including Jewish Family Services, Goodwill Industries, the United Negro College Fund, the Baltimore Jewish Council, Baltimore Mental Health Systems, and the American Council to Improve Neighborhoods. He received honorary doctorates in public service from the University of Maryland at Baltimore and the University of Maryland at Baltimore County, as well as awards from the Johns Hopkins University, the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Haverford College, Goucher College, and Morgan State University.

Through his tireless work ethic and never-ending optimism, Walter Sondheim Jr., fueled the fire for countless projects and institutions throughout the City of Baltimore. His spirit will live on forever in the history of this great city, and we should all be thankful that a man of such integrity, ingenuity, and free thinking chose to make Baltimore his home, workplace, and the focus of his career. This City of Baltimore and the State of Maryland have lost not only a great man, but a great public servant who showed us that honesty and good will toward all are traits that will make us successful in whatever endeavors we may choose to pursue. We thank you for your endless dedication to the City of Baltimore, who has lost a leader it will not soon be able to replace.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That this Body expresses our deep appreciation for the contributions of the father of modern Baltimore, Walter Sondheim Jr., for his dedication as a champion for Baltimore's downtown renaissance, his tireless efforts to desegregate Baltimore City schools, for being a leader with vision and determination who helped build Baltimore into the great city that it has become, for helping to bring social and economic prosperity to the City of Baltimore, and for showing us all, by example, that with an optimistic outlook, we can all work together to achieve great things.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to Mayor, the Family of Mr. Walter Sondheim Jr., and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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