



Legislation Details (With Text)

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Effective date:

Title: NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh does hereby recognize Darnella Wilson for her trailblazing service, her unwavering commitment to community, and her extraordinary contributions to the history of emergency medical care; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh does hereby declare Tuesday, December 16, 2025 to be "Darnella Wilson Day" in the City of Pittsburgh.

Sponsors: Theresa Kail-Smith, All Members

Indexes: PROCLAMATION - MRS. KAIL-SMITH

Code sections:

Attachments:

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
12/16/2025	1	City Council	Adopted	Pass

WHEREAS, Darnella Wilson was born in 1957 to George and Berneal Wilson, the middle child in a close-knit family. She grew up in Manchester on the North Side, where her family was among the first Black residents on Columbus Avenue. Her parents founded Wilson's Bar-B-Q, a from-scratch family business and Pittsburgh landmark, where Darnella worked throughout her childhood; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from Allegheny High School at age 17, she entered history as a dispatcher for the renowned Freedom House Ambulance Service-the nation's first paramedic program, founded in 1967 and staffed by Black men and women who pioneered modern prehospital care. When the City of Pittsburgh assumed control of EMS in 1975, she transferred to the city system, trained as an EMT, and in 1976 became the first Black female paramedic for the City of Pittsburgh-and ultimately in the United States; and

WHEREAS, at just eighteen, she was also performing as a singer, appearing at the legendary Crawford Grill in the Hill District, later singing the National Anthem for Mayor Tom Murphy's second inaugural address and for the Pittsburgh Steelers' first post-9/11 playoff game in recognition of Public Safety, performing with jazz trumpet legend Freddie Hubbard in New York City, and featured at numerous other prestigious events; and

WHEREAS, in 1994, Darnella earned her Associate of Science in Nursing and began her career as a registered nurse, first at St. Francis Central and, after its closure, in the Emergency Department at UPMC Presbyterian-the same hospital where Freedom House Ambulance began years earlier in a small vestibule. Darnella retired in 2010 after 35 years of combined service as a paramedic and registered nurse, all while raising her children and uplifting her community. She later expanded her skills by earning a Culinary Diploma from the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild in 2015 and an Associate of Science degree from the Community College of Allegheny County in 2025; and

WHEREAS, as a member of the original Freedom House family, Darnella traveled nationwide with the first documentary on the Freedom House Ambulance Service to ensure the true pioneers of modern EMS received proper recognition. Today, she continues to sing, travel, and keynote EMT and paramedic graduations, sharing the history of Freedom House and the lessons of courage, resilience, and excellence that define her life; and

WHEREAS, her affiliations include the Emergency Nurses Association, the Black Nurses Association, four years as a committee woman, service with local food banks, and ongoing commitments rooted in service, justice, and community care; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh does hereby recognize **Darnella Wilson** for her trailblazing service, her unwavering commitment to community, and her extraordinary contributions to the history of emergency medical care; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh does hereby declare Tuesday, December 16, 2025 to be “**Darnella Wilson Day**” in the City of Pittsburgh.