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Philadelphia School Board Member Named Top Urban Educator

PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 23 – School board member Joyce Wilkerson of the School District of Philadelphia received recognition as the 2025 Urban Educator of the Year at the Council of the Great City Schools’ 69th Annual Fall Conference.

Four school board members from big-city school districts competed for the nation’s highest honor in urban education leadership, presented annually, in alternate years, to either an outstanding school superintendent or school board member from 81 of the largest urban public-school systems in the country.

Urban school leaders applauded Wilkerson during the Council’s Excellence in Urban Education Awards Ceremony, where she received the prestigious leadership award.

Sponsored by the Council and Scholastic, the global children’s publishing, education, and media company, the top prize is presented in memory of Richard R. Green, the first African American chancellor of the New York City school system, and businessman Edward Garner, who served on the Denver school board.

Wilkerson is the longest-serving member of the Philadelphia school board, having begun her tenure in 2016 when she was appointed chair of the state-controlled School Reform Commission. In this position, she played a key role in helping the School District of Philadelphia transition to local control and achieve financial stability. From 2018 until 2022, she served as president of the school board, where she led efforts to implement “Goals & Guardrails,” a strategic plan to raise student achievement in Philadelphia public schools. As part of the plan, the school board dedicates a significant portion of its time to establishing achievement goals in reading, math, and college and career readiness.

“Under Wilkerson’s leadership, the Philadelphia school board adopted the groundbreaking “Goals and Guardrails” initiative, which focuses on improving student outcomes and has become a cornerstone of the district’s work, serving as a national model,” said Council Executive Director Ray Hart. “She has reshaped the educational landscape in Philadelphia through her unwavering advocacy for students, along with her commitment to equity and excellence.

Wilkerson’s dedication to strengthening public education has made her one of the most effective school board members in the nation. Congratulations on this well-deserved award.”

As the recipient of the 2025 Green-Garner Award, Wilkerson receives a \$10,000 college scholarship to present to a student in the School District of Philadelphia.

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About the Council of the Great City Schools

The Council of the Great City Schools is the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools. Composed of 81 large city school districts, its mission is to promote the cause of urban schools and to advocate for inner-city students through legislation, research, and media relations. For more information, visit www.cgcs.org