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# Philly school board member Joyce Wilkerson receives 2025 urban educator of the year honor

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Philadelphia school board member Joyce Wilkerson received a $10,000 college scholarship to award to a student in the School District of Philadelphia. —SUBMITTED PHOTO

Philadelphia Board of Education member Joyce Wilkerson has been named the 2025 Urban Educator of the Year by the Council of the Great City Schools, the nation's leading organization for urban public schools.

She was honored during the Council's recent 69th annual fall conference in Philadelphia and received a $10,000 college scholarship to award to a student in the School District of Philadelphia.

Wilkerson was selected from four finalists representing major U.S. cities. The annual award alternates between recognizing an outstanding superintendent and a distinguished board member from 81 of the largest urban districts in the country.

"She has reshaped the educational landscape in Philadelphia through her unwavering advocacy for students, along with her commitment to equity and excellence," said Council of Great City Schools Executive Director Ray Hart in a statement.

Wilkerson is Philadelphia's longest-serving school board member. She began her tenure in 2016 as chair of the state-controlled School Reform Commission, overseeing the school district's transition to local control and financial stability.

From 2018 to 2022, Wilkerson served as president of the Board of Education, the school district's governing body. In this role, she led the implementation of Goals and Guardrails, a strategic plan aimed at improving student achievement across the district.

Under the plan, the school board dedicates much of its time to setting and monitoring progress on goals in reading, math, science and college and career readiness.

While the board continues to vote on contracts and oversee district operations, it now emphasizes academic outcomes and student success. In 2024, Mayor Cherelle Parker reappointed Wilkerson to the board as president emeritus, honoring her continued leadership and experience.

Reginald Streater, president of the Board of Education, said the award is a well-deserved recognition of Wilkerson's leadership in education.

"Throughout her tenure, Joyce has been a steadfast advocate for equity and student success," he said. "Her vision, leadership and deep commitment to public education have guided the District through both challenges and opportunities — always keeping students at the heart of every decision.

"The board is profoundly grateful to serve alongside Joyce and to witness firsthand her unwavering dedication to ensuring that every student in Philadelphia has access to a high-quality education," he added.

“She is a reminder that we do not have to look far for exemplars of excellence and that national heroes are right here in Philadelphia,” Streater said.