



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
459 BROADWAY
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

MAYOR E. DENISE SIMMONS
795 Massachusetts Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02139
esimmons@cambridgema.gov

CAROLINE HUNTER
23 Rockwell Street
Cambridge, MA 02139
carhunter@cpsd.us

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WHEREAS: The School Committee was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. Robert S. Peterkin—a distinguished and visionary educator who leaves a profound legacy of advocacy for children’s rights, dedication to educational innovation, and an enduring impact on countless lives—on December 23, 2024; and

WHEREAS: Dr. Peterkin’s extraordinary 50-year career began in Albany, New York, where he taught emotionally disturbed children and founded an alternative school for high school dropouts, demonstrating his commitment to addressing the needs of vulnerable students; and

WHEREAS: As Boston’s first Black public school Headmaster, Dr. Peterkin guided The English High School during the busing era, transforming it into an integrated Magnet School for the Arts, and he later served as Deputy Superintendent in Boston and Superintendent of Schools in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he introduced initiatives such as school-level decision-making, bilingual education, and specialized programs for African American boys; and

WHEREAS: In 1991, Dr. Peterkin joined Harvard University as Director of the Urban Superintendents Program, preparing a diverse cadre of urban school leaders, particularly women and persons of color, while serving as an indispensable mentor and advocate for educational equity; and

WHEREAS: Beyond his professional accomplishments, Dr. Peterkin contributed as an educational consultant, court-appointed expert, and board member for organizations including the B.E.L.L. Foundation, National Urban Alliance, TERC, and Boston Youth Theater, further amplifying his impact on education and young people’s well-being; and

WHEREAS: Dr. Peterkin was a devoted husband to the late Louise Bauer, to whom he was married for 56 years, and a beloved community figure whose passions for jazz, the New York Yankees, and education reflected his vibrant character; and

WHEREAS: Dr. Peterkin’s warmth, wisdom, and unwavering belief in individuals’ potential inspired colleagues and students to rise to challenges and achieve their fullest potential, leaving an indelible imprint on the hearts and minds of those fortunate to know him; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the School Committee formally go on record in extending its deepest condolences to the family of Dr. Robert S. Peterkin for their tremendous loss; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Executive Secretary be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to the family of Dr. Robert S. Peterkin on behalf of the entire School Committee.