



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER BROOKE PINTO
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W., SUITE 106
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

November 01, 2022

Nyasha Smith, Secretary
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Smith,

Today, along with Councilmembers Elissa Silverman, Kenyan McDuffie, Mary M. Cheh, Vincent C. Gray, Brianne K. Nadeau, Robert C. White, Jr., and Anita Bonds, I am introducing the “William Dorsey Swann Way Designation Act of 2022.” Please find enclosed a signed copy of the legislation.

This legislation would symbolically designate Swann Street N.W., which is located between 14th Street N.W. and 19th Street N.W, in Ward 2, as “William Dorsey Swann Way.” Swann Street N.W. was chosen as a way to honor the history of the Strivers’ Section Historic District as a Black neighborhood and Dupont Circle’s history as the epicenter of Washington’s LGBT community.

William Dorsey Swann (c. 1858-1925), self-referred to as “The Queen of Drag,” was a Black, Queer Washingtonian, and former enslaved person who was an early pioneer in LGBTQ rights. Beginning in the 1880s, William Dorsey Swann ran a group known as the “House of Swann” and organized balls, largely attended by Queer, formerly enslaved men who would gather to dance and cross-dress.

William Dorsey Swann was persecuted by the authorities and arrested multiple times for “impersonating a woman” and “keeping a disorderly house,” and was the first known American activist to lead an LGBTQ resistance group. He eventually sought a pardon from President Grover Cleveland, making him the first American on record to pursue legal action in defense of LGBTQ rights.

According to the January 24, 1912, Congressional Record for the U.S. Senate, Swann Street N.W. was named for Thomas Swann, former Mayor of Baltimore, Governor of Maryland, and enslaver. Symbolically designating this street in honor of native Washingtonian and trail-blazing LGBTQ rights activist William Dorsey Swann is an opportunity to ensure that our streets honor those who embody the District’s values of social equality and human dignity.

Should you have any questions about this legislation, please contact my Legislative Counsel, Kristin Ewing, at kewing@dccouncil.gov.


Thank you,


A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "BE PINTO". The letters are stylized and connected, with a long horizontal flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Brooke Pinto

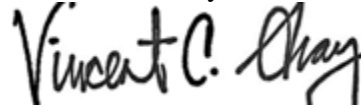
1 
2 Councilmember Elissa Silverman


Councilmember Brooke Pinto


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6 Councilmember Mary M. Cheh


Councilmember Kenyan R. McDuffie

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10 Councilmember Brianne K. Nadeau


Councilmember Vincent C. Gray

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14 Councilmember Anita Bonds


Councilmember Robert C. White

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19 AN ACT

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24 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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28 To symbolically designate Swann Street, N.W., between 14th Street, N.W., and 19th Street,
29 N.W., in Ward 2, as William Dorsey Swann Way.

30 BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this
31 act may be cited as the “William Dorsey Swann Way Designation Act of 2022”.

32 Sec. 2. Pursuant to sections 401, 403a, and 423 of the Street and Alley Closing and
33 Acquisition Procedures Act of 1982, effective March 10, 1983 (D.C. Law 4-201; D.C. Official
34 Code §§ 9-204.01, 9-204.03a, and 9-204.23), the Council symbolically designates Swann Street,
35 N.W., between 14th Street, N.W., and 19th Street, N.W., as “William Dorsey Swann Way”.

36 Sec. 3. Fiscal impact statement.

37 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal
38 impact statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975,
39 approved October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

40 Sec. 4. Effective date.

41 This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the
42 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as
43 provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December
44 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of
45 Columbia Register.