



PHILADELPHIA *FEDERATION of TEACHERS*

Jerry T. Jordan, President | January 23, 2023 | 3:15PM

Heston Elementary | Mayoral Endorsement Press Conference

Good afternoon, and thank you for joining us today for what is a really exciting day for us at the PFT. Because it's a day that represents so much of what we have been fighting for over the years—a day that we have the opportunity to look back and reflect upon where we've been and where we're going. It allows us to reflect on the decades we've spent, and the progress made, in our quest for justice, for equity, and for the pursuit of a better tomorrow.

And today we reflect on who has been with us shoulder to shoulder every step of the way. In the joys. In the sorrows. In the momentous wins, and in the profound losses. In the fights *against* so much, and in the advocacy for what we know our young people and educators need. In the roar of a march of thousands, and in the quiet visit to an elementary school. In the blazing heat, and in the bitter cold.

In the many, many chapters of this union and our fight for justice, there is **one candidate** in the race for Mayor of our beautiful city that has been there with us ***through all of it***.

And that person is the **indefatigable, inimitable, unrelenting powerhouse** of boundless energy and unparalleled determination— **Helen. Gym.**

Over the course of the last several weeks, our union has engaged in a thorough, member-driven process to determine *if* and *who* the PFT should endorse in the May primary for Mayor. Each declared candidate was given the opportunity to present before the PFT members at a virtual general membership meeting.

The process culminated in a **member-wide vote**, where every PFT member had the opportunity to vote on their preference for a candidate for Mayor, or to vote not to endorse any candidate.

I cannot say that the results surprised me. Well, maybe a little bit– Helen’s landslide win in our member-wide vote was **resounding**. Garnering **more than four times the vote as anyone else**, Helen is the candidate that PFT members *know* and *trust*. And in a vote of thousands upon thousands of PFT members, that much was quite clear.

And trust is built over time. It’s built in the experiences we share, the values that unite us, and the work we do together. Our members have seen Helen at the forefront of our collective work day in and day out. And there’s just no replacing that.

Together, **Helen Gym and the PFT** have led the charge in: fighting against school closures, dismantling a state takeover that wreaked havoc on our schools, fighting to return nurses and counselors to every building, fighting to remove toxins like lead and asbestos from our schools, ensuring access to clean water in schools, ensuring the safe opening of school buildings in the wake of COVID, and helping secure the settlement of a strong contract for all of our members-- just to name a few of the things we’ve partnered up on over the years.

And with our city at a crossroads, with the urgent need to address public safety and so many other crucial issues, our members have **unequivocally said Helen Gym is the person they choose** to lead our city in the work ahead.

I am so proud to be at Heston today with their PFT staff representative **LeShawna Coleman**, and with a really fantastic team of school staff led by their phenomenal building representative **Lenora Howard**. Lenora works tirelessly each day not just in her role as an educator, but also in her role in ensuring that the PFT chapter at Heston is strong and mobilized. And so it was not a surprise to me that this chapter chose Helen Gym as their candidate for Mayor.

Lenora, I am so grateful for all you do each day, and I am honored to turn it over to you.