



February 16, 2026

City of Columbus Office of Mayor Andrew J. Ginther
c/o Melanie Crabill, Columbus Hall of Fame
90 West Broad Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215-9005

Dear Mayor Ginther and Members of the Hall of Fame Selection Committee,

As members of the Gahanna City Council, we are honored to offer this letter of support for the posthumous nomination of Cora May Jones Thurman to the Columbus Hall of Fame.

Cora Thurman's life and legacy are deeply rooted in Columbus and reflect a lifetime of service that strengthened the fabric of our community. In 1913, she became the first African American graduate of Gahanna High School, demonstrating extraordinary determination at a time when educational access for Black students was severely limited. After earning a lifetime teaching certificate in 1915, she began a distinguished 41-year career in public education.

From 1930 until her retirement in 1957, Ms. Thurman served Columbus Public Schools as a special needs educator. There, she developed innovative remedial reading methods that were shared statewide and beyond, directly improving outcomes for countless students. Her work helped expand educational opportunity during a period marked by racial segregation and systemic inequities, making a lasting impact on generations of Columbus families.

Her influence extended far beyond the classroom. One of her former students, Ellen Walker Craig-Jones, became the first African American woman elected mayor in the United States (Urbancrest, 1972–1975), reflecting the generational impact of Ms. Thurman's mentorship and leadership. In 1940, she and her students were selected to greet President Franklin D. Roosevelt during his visit to Columbus, underscoring her standing as a respected educator and civic leader within the city.

Committed to lifelong learning, Ms. Thurman earned a Bachelor's degree with honors (1944) and a Master's degree in Special Education (1946) from Hampton Institute. She also pursued studies at Capital University and The Ohio State University, becoming one of the first African American women to attend Capital University and the first in her family to earn both a bachelor's and master's degree.

Her professional excellence was widely recognized. She was a national finalist for "Best Teacher of 1948," received the Sojourner Truth Award in 1956 for meritorious community service and advancing the status of women, and earned multiple commendations from the Columbus Board of Education. Her philanthropic efforts supported

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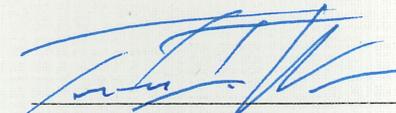


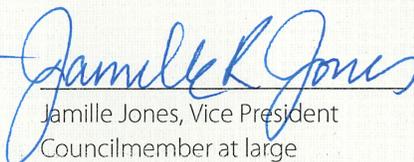
widows, orphans, and families in need, reflecting her belief that leadership in education must be paired with service to the broader community.

Cora Thurman's enduring contributions to Columbus, through education, mentorship, civic engagement, and barrier-breaking leadership, represent the very qualities the Columbus Hall of Fame seeks to recognize. Her work not only shaped the lives of her students but also strengthened the city's commitment to opportunity, equity, and excellence.

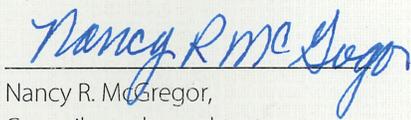
For these reasons, we offer our endorsement of Cora Thurman's posthumous induction. Her impact on Ohio's educational system and on generations of Ohioans is historic, enduring, and has made Gahanna proud.

Respectfully submitted,

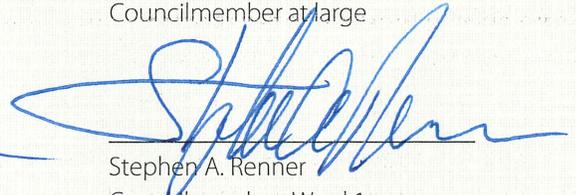

Trenton I. Weaver, President
Councilmember, Ward 4

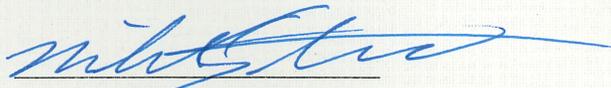

Jamille Jones, Vice President
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