



## Legislation Text

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### Res. No. 450-A

Resolution recognizing the contributions of Def Jam to the music industry and to music lovers everywhere by designating January 2024 as Def Jam Recognition Month in the City of New York.

By Council Members Williams, Stevens, Riley, Louis, Joseph, Fariás, Hudson, Ossé, Rivera, Nurse, Cabán, Avilés, De La Rosa, Krishnan and the Public Advocate (Mr. Williams)

Whereas, Rick Rubin began recording rap music in his dorm room at the Weinstein Residence Hall of New York University and gave birth to Def Jam Recordings (Def Jam), using a loan from his parents to get the company started; and

Whereas, Rubin soon joined with Russell Simmons, who brought his business expertise as a prominent figure in the Hip Hop scene and as the already-established manager of Run DMC, the renowned rap trio from Hollis, Queens; and

Whereas, Rubin and Simmons, both just in their twenties, launched Def Jam from New York City (NYC) to eventual worldwide acclaim, along with the careers of many of the label's iconic artists; and

Whereas, Rubin found innovative ways to get the energy and sound of live Hip Hop into the songs and albums he produced; and

Whereas, Simmons strove for authenticity for his artists and their music, using the slogan "keeping it real" to characterize who the artists were and what they wanted to say in their music; and

Whereas, Rubin and Simmons began by recording local talent, who became a who's who of rap royalty; and

Whereas, LL Cool J, a 17-year-old from Queens, was one of Def Jam's earliest artists, releasing his single "I Need a Beat" in 1984, marking the official launch of Def Jam, and his debut album *Radio* in 1985 and

going on to become one of the first rappers to earn mainstream success; and

Whereas, The Beastie Boys, a trio of Jewish white rappers from Long Island, who brought Hip Hop to the suburbs, also signed early with Def Jam and released their single “Rock Hard” in 1984 and their first album *Licensed to Ill* in 1986, which became the best-selling rap album of the 1980s; and

Whereas, Def Jam signed Public Enemy, also hailing from Long Island, in the late 1980s, giving voice to the social and political concerns of African Americans and ensuring Public Enemy’s significant and lasting influence on rap music; and

Whereas, Even though Rubin left Def Jam in 1988 and Simmons left in 1999, the pre-eminence of Def Jam (through a variety of corporate entities over the years) did not wane as it added new executives and some of the music industry’s biggest artists over the next four decades, including JAY-Z, DMX, Ja Rule, Method Man & Redman, Ludacris, Rihanna, Jeezy, Kanye West, Justin Bieber, Logic, Pusha T, Jadakiss, Vince Staples, Jeremih, Big Sean, YG, 2 Chainz, Dave East, and Jhené Aiko; and

Whereas, Def Jam has promoted artists of various racial and ethnic backgrounds and has brought their music to people of all demographics nationwide and worldwide; and

Whereas, Def Jam has contributed substantially to the health of the music industry and the economy of NYC; and

Whereas, Def Jam continues to thrive as it enters its 40th year in 2024, producing new music with up-and-coming artists, who will take their places alongside the pioneers who began their careers with Def Jam decades ago; and

Whereas, The designation of Def Jam Recognition Month commemorates Rubin’s pioneering producing and Simmons’s business acumen and the impact that they had on the music industry and continue to have on fans everywhere; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York recognizes the contributions of Def Jam to the music industry and to music lovers everywhere by designating January 2024 as Def Jam Recognition Month in

the City of New York.

LS #10955  
5/31/23  
RHP