



# PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

*for greater philadelphia*

July 21, 2023

Philadelphia Historical Commission  
1515 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Re: 1601 Mount Vernon Street

Dear Members of the Historical Commission,

I am writing to support the application for the restoration and new rear addition at 1601 Mount Vernon Street. The property, significant to the Spring Garden Historic District for its association with renowned abolitionist Robert Purvis, suffered severe neglect from an absentee landlord for many years. Thankfully an Act 135 Conservatorship was granted to the Spring Garden Civic Association in 2018. They completed emergency stabilization work on the building, addressing many longstanding City violations.

We support the new owners' proposal to restore the façade to its residential appearance during Purvis's occupancy and remove the 1920s storefront elements. We also support the construction of a new three-story ell that would allow the property to support five residential units. The design is similar in massing and features to the historic ell that was demolished in light of unsafe and dangerous conditions. This proposal is compatible with the Spring Garden Historic District and is a successful example of a community association utilizing Act 135 to preserve a significant property.

We encourage you to approve this application and ensure that this civil rights landmark has the long life it clearly merits. Robert Purvis, a well-known lecturer, writer, and social activist, was a key figure in the anti-slavery movement in the mid-nineteenth century-considered the "President" of the Underground Railroad.

Sincerely,

Hanna Stark  
Advocacy Associate