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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 30

Offered January 11, 2012

Prefiled January 10, 2012

Celebrating the life of Thelma Ferguson Harrison.

Patron—Miller, Y.B.

WHEREAS, Thelma Ferguson Harrison of Norfolk, a pioneering force for early childhood literacy, died on July 24, 2011; and

WHEREAS, Thelma Harrison spent her early years in the historic neighborhood of Lamberts Point in Norfolk, the daughter of a popular assistant pastor and his wife, before relocating to New York with her family at the age of nine; and

WHEREAS, Thelma Harrison lived in New York for more than five decades, enjoying a 40-year nursing career at Manhattan's Lenox Hill Hospital and participating in community and civic affairs through her membership at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem; and

WHEREAS, in 1980, Thelma Harrison returned to her hometown, joining with the late Alma Williams to encourage voter registration and, after one of Ms. Williams' grandchildren stated, "Mama, I want to read," was inspired to cofound the early childhood literacy program of the same name in 1988 in Norfolk's Park Place community; and

WHEREAS, Thelma Harrison recognized the importance of providing preschool students with access to tutors and reading materials that would help prepare them for formal education and generate a lifelong interest in learning; and

WHEREAS, a gracious and determined lady, Thelma Harrison worked with local and state officials, educators, and community leaders to gain support for the innovative literacy program, which has changed the lives of countless children; and

WHEREAS, Thelma Harrison's efforts on behalf of children drew local and national recognition, including an honorary doctorate from Old Dominion University, a Martin Luther King Jr. Award for Service to Humanity, and a Volvo for Life award; and

WHEREAS, an exemplary role model for all, Thelma Harrison witnessed many changes in the nation and world throughout her long and extraordinarily well-lived life and helped forge a new path for many of the children of Norfolk; and

WHEREAS, predeceased by her husband, Fred, Thelma Harrison will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by many loving family members, friends, admirers, and the children whose lives she touched; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of an admired educator and community leader, Thelma Ferguson Harrison; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Thelma Ferguson Harrison as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for her memory.

INTRODUCED

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