

## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 799

*Celebrating the life of Patricia Godbolt White.*

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 13, 2015  
 Agreed to by the Senate, February 19, 2015

WHEREAS, Patricia Godbolt White of Norfolk, one of the first students to integrate the Norfolk Public Schools system, who later spent her career teaching in the same school division, a mentor and role model, a poet, and a loving mother and grandmother, died on January 23, 2015; and

WHEREAS, in 1959, Patricia White was one of 17 African American students to enroll in one of Norfolk's formerly all-white public schools—at that time the largest school district in the Commonwealth; the group, which became known as the Norfolk 17, endured threats, taunts, and racial bigotry from students and teachers; and

WHEREAS, Patricia White, who was one of two black students to enter Norview High School, graduated in 1960; later, she recalled her fear that she might be shot on graduation day to prevent her from becoming the first African American student to graduate from a desegregated school in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, continuing her education, Patricia White graduated from Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland, in 1964, the first African American woman to earn a bachelor's degree from the school, and she also received a master's degree from Norfolk State University; and

WHEREAS, Patricia White became a teacher in the Norfolk Public Schools system, spending most of her 42-year career at Booker T. Washington High School, where she was chair of the science department; and

WHEREAS, as an inspiration and support to many of the young men and women she taught, Patricia White often helped students after hours and she willingly passed on her personal philosophy of "believing in the improbable" as she encouraged the students to believe in themselves; and

WHEREAS, Patricia White was the author of two books, *Three Generations to Integration* and *Evolution of Esprit'd P.G.*, a collection of poetry; she also was in demand as a public speaker, appearing before many civic organizations, school groups, and churches; and

WHEREAS, among the organizations that benefited from Patricia White's guidance and leadership were Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and Les Gemmes, Inc.; she received many awards and honors over the years, and she was featured in an exhibit at the Chrysler Museum of Art marking the 50th anniversary of the end of Massive Resistance; and

WHEREAS, Patricia Godbolt White will be greatly missed and fondly remembered by her children, Louis, Patrice, and Lavell, and their families, and by many other family members, former students, and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Patricia Godbolt White of Norfolk, one of the first students to integrate the Norfolk Public Schools system, a noted teacher, a mentor and role model, a poet, and a loving mother and grandmother; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Patricia Godbolt White as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for her memory.

ENROLLED

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