

2015 SESSION

ENROLLED

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 99

Celebrating the life of Bonnie Estelle McEachin.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 19, 2015

WHEREAS, Bonnie Estelle McEachin of Norfolk, a successful businesswoman who owned the Plaza Hotel and a supporter of the African American community in Hampton Roads, died on October 16, 1996, and is being honored in 2015 by the Association for the Study of Black History and Culture during Black History Month; and

WHEREAS, in 2015, Bonnie McEachin's life and legacy is featured in an exhibit that opens in February at Slover Library in honor of African American History Month; the theme of the exhibition is "A Century of Black Life, History and Culture"; and

WHEREAS, Bonnie McEachin was born in Rose Hill, North Carolina, and moved to Norfolk as a young woman; she soon married Graham McEachin, and the couple's business ventures began when they opened the Shalimar Grill restaurant; and

WHEREAS, with the success of the Shalimar Grill, Bonnie and Graham McEachin then opened the Plaza House; they entered the hotel business in 1950 when they purchased a building at the corner of 18th and Church streets in Norfolk, renaming it the Plaza Hotel; and

WHEREAS, with no experience in running a hotel, the first year was challenging and difficult for Bonnie McEachin and her husband, but her philosophy of "Plan your work, then work your plan, and do what you started out to do" motivated her as they learned by trial and error; and

WHEREAS, Bonnie McEachin's determination to succeed bore fruit and the Plaza Hotel became Norfolk's premier lodging and entertainment venue for the city's burgeoning African American community; and

WHEREAS, in 1955, with Bonnie McEachin as proprietor, the Plaza Hotel boasted a dining room, cocktail lounge, and elegantly appointed guest rooms each with a radio and telephone; some rooms also had air conditioning; and

WHEREAS, under Bonnie McEachin's supervision, the Plaza Hotel hosted social events and was a venue for nationally known entertainers and other distinguished African Americans; as a teenager, Aretha Franklin stayed at the Plaza Hotel with her father, who was a well-known evangelist; and

WHEREAS, Bonnie McEachin was a member of Lodge No. 73 of the Order of the Eastern Star, the Norfolk Temple Elks ladies auxiliary, and many other organizations; she served as vice president of Norfolk Community Hospital and the Nationwide Hotel Association; and

WHEREAS, known for her friendliness and long regarded for her fashion style and extensive wardrobe, Bonnie McEachin was recognized as one of the nation's 10 best-dressed women and was featured in an advertisement in *Ebony* magazine in 1960 that portrayed her elegance and beauty; and

WHEREAS, Bonnie McEachin, who studied at the Norfolk division of Virginia State University and received an honorary degree from Norfolk State University, was honored by the United States Department of Commerce and the Women Allied Liaisons Leaders of Strength organization; and

WHEREAS, Bonnie McEachin's leadership and success derived from her faith; she enjoyed fellowship and worship as a member of Historic First Baptist Church on East Bute Street; and

WHEREAS, Bonnie McEachin, who was predeceased by her husband and by her daughter, Frances, is greatly missed and fondly remembered by her son, Keith McEachin; and by many other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of Virginia hereby note with great sadness the loss of Bonnie Estelle McEachin of Norfolk, who in 2015 is being honored during Black History Month, and who was a successful businesswoman and owner of the Plaza Hotel and a supporter of the African American community in Hampton Roads; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Bonnie Estelle McEachin as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's respect for her memory.

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