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HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 303

Offered January 17, 2017

Denouncing the intimidation of the Commonwealth's residents, affirming the commitment to diversity, and safeguarding the civil rights and dignity of all Virginians.

Patrons—Lopez, Aird, Bagby, Bell, John J., Boysko, Bulova, Filler-Corn, Hayes, Heretick, Herring, Hester, Hope, James, Keam, Kory, Krizek, Levine, Lindsey, McQuinn, Mullin, Murphy, Plum, Price, Rasoul, Sickles, Simon, Sullivan, Torian, Toscano, Tyler, Ward and Watts

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, in recent years, there has been a sense of uncertainty and fear among many communities across our Commonwealth and the nation; and

WHEREAS, America is a nation of immigrants, a great melting pot of every racial, ethnic, cultural, nationality, religious group, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, and gender; and,

WHEREAS, in 2016, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report, which catalogs crimes, documented over 5,800 incidents and over 7,100 victims of hate crimes, noting that 59 percent of reported incidents were motivated by race, ethnicity, or ancestry and that 53 percent of such attacks were targeted toward African Americans, 20 percent of victims were assaulted due to their religion, 17 percent of victims were assailed because of their sexual orientation, two percent were targeted for their gender identity, one percent were attacked due to their disability, and 0.5 percent were assaulted because of their gender; and

WHEREAS, in 2015, hate crimes based on religion increased 23 percent, including an increase in reported anti-Jewish crimes and a 67 percent increase in crimes against Muslims; and

WHEREAS, the constitutional right to freedom of religion is a cherished American value, and violence or hate speech toward any American based on his faith conflicts with the nation's founding principles; and

WHEREAS, racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity is America's greatest strength and makes the country enviable among other nations; America depends upon the contributions of all citizens, and the New American and immigrant communities have made innumerable contributions to the social, cultural, and economic well-being of American society; and

WHEREAS, the rise of hateful and intolerant acts of bigotry against New Americans, Muslim Americans, Jewish Americans, Latino Americans, Asian Americans, African Americans, LGBTQ Americans, Americans with disabilities, and other racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities is fueled by ignorance and isolationism; racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious intolerance is abhorrent and disrespectful of American beliefs, devalues American principles, weakens democracy and the nation's standing as a world leader, and harms victims, their families, and communities; and

WHEREAS, the inalienable rights and dignity of all American citizens, regardless of race, ethnicity, faith, beliefs, culture, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and gender identity should be steadfastly affirmed and protected, and acts of racial animus, intolerance, intimidation, and violence must be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law to ensure the free expression of faith and the unfettered practice of religion as the founding fathers envisioned; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's diverse population consists of both native-born citizens and immigrants whose collective cultures, religions, backgrounds, orientations, abilities, and perspectives combine to form a pluralistic community that welcomes persons and families of all backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, Virginia should be a safe place for immigrants from all countries, people of color, Jews, Muslims, other religious minorities, LGBTQ people, women, and persons with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth must assure its vulnerable communities that they are supported and that it is committed to maintaining and improving their quality of life and will not tolerate acts of hate, discrimination, bullying, harassment, or any type of intimidation against them; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth has a strong tradition and mission of embracing and valuing diversity and respecting the civil and human rights of all residents, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, ability, or immigration status; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's large immigrant population contributes to the social fabric and economic growth of the state, and it is the Commonwealth's intent to ensure that immigrant residents participate freely in civic life and daily activities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Delegates hereby denounce the intimidation of the Commonwealth's residents, affirm the commitment to diversity, and safeguard the civil rights and dignity of all Virginians; and, be it

INTRODUCED

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58 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the House of Delegates denounces hate speech, hate crimes,
59 harassment, racial bias, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, anti-immigrant activity, harmful bias and
60 discrimination in all forms; and, be it

61 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Commonwealth remain committed to diversity and fostering an
62 atmosphere of inclusiveness that respects the dignity and worth of every person without regard to race,
63 color, gender, religion, ancestry, national origin, immigration status, marital status, age, disability, sexual
64 orientation, gender identity, or familial status; and, be it

65 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the House of Delegates call upon all citizens and residents and state
66 employees to resist and oppose acts of intimidation, bullying, discrimination, and violence and support
67 victims of such acts; and, be it

68 RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution
69 to the Secretary of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Executive Director of the
70 State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, requesting that they further disseminate copies of this
71 resolution to their respective constituents so that they may be apprised of the sense of the House of
72 Delegates in this matter.