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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 622

Offered January 9, 2019

Prefiled January 4, 2019

Commending the Matthew Shepard Foundation.

Patrons—Sickles, Adams, D.M., Ayala, Bell, John J., Bourne, Bulova, Carr, Carter, Delaney, Filler-Corn, Heretick, Hope, Hurst, James, Jones, J.C., Keam, Kory, Krizek, Levine, Lindsey, Lopez, Mullin, Murphy, Plum, Rasoul, Reid, Rodman, Roem, Simon, Sullivan, Torian, Toscano, Tran, Tyler, VanValkenburg, Ward and Watts; Senator: Ebbin

WHEREAS, for 20 years, the Matthew Shepard Foundation has worked to honor the memory of its namesake through local, regional, and national outreach programs designed to replace hate with understanding, compassion, and acceptance; and

WHEREAS, on October 7, 1998, Matthew Shepard, a 21-year-old student at the University of Wyoming, was brutally attacked, tied to a fence post in a field near Laramie, Wyoming, and left to die; he tragically succumbed to his injuries in a hospital on October 12; and

WHEREAS, the Matthew Shepard Foundation was established in 1998 by Matthew Shepard's parents, Judy and Dennis Shepard, to provide support for LGBT youths through the Matthew's Place online resource center and to help create a world where all LGBT people are free from fear and bigotry through advocacy, education, and outreach; and

WHEREAS, Matthew Shepard's passion for civil rights and determination to build a more just, caring world lives on in the Matthew Shepard Foundation's mission to help individuals find their voice, create change in their communities, and effectively respond to hate in their schools, neighborhoods, and homes; the foundation has helped create dialogue on tolerance through the plays *The Laramie Project* and *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*; and

WHEREAS, the Matthew Shepard Foundation supported the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which expanded the federal definition of hate crimes to include gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability and removed a prerequisite that a victim must be engaging in a form of federally protected activity, such as voting, giving federal agencies more authority to conduct hate crimes investigations; and

WHEREAS, the Matthew Shepard Foundation continues to engage in many activities to promote a tolerant society and ensure the safety and visibility of the LGBT community, with the hope that its work will one day no longer be necessary; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Matthew Shepard Foundation for its service to communities throughout the United States on the occasion of its 20th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Judy and Dennis Shepard, founders of the Matthew Shepard Foundation, as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the foundation's diligent work to raise awareness of prejudice and bigotry and build a stronger, more inclusive world.

INTRODUCED

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