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## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 623

Offered January 9, 2019

Prefiled January 4, 2019

*Celebrating the life of Matthew Wayne Shepard.*

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, Landes, Levine, Lindsey, Lopez, Mullin, Murphy, Plum, Rasoul, Reid, Rodman, Roem, Simon, Sullivan, Torian, Toscano, Tran, Tyler, VanValkenburg, Ward and Watts; Senator: Ebbin

WHEREAS, Matthew Wayne Shepard, an openly gay student at the University of Wyoming who died tragically on October 12, 1998, inspired a legacy of support for LGBT communities throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, a native of Casper, Wyoming, Matthew Shepard was the first of two sons born to Judy and Dennis Shepard; he attended Natrona County High School in Wyoming before graduating from The American School in Switzerland, where he was active in theater and language programs; and

WHEREAS, Matthew Shepard studied at Catawba College in North Carolina and Casper College in Wyoming, then majored in political science at the University of Wyoming, where he was chosen as the student representative for the Wyoming Environmental Council; and

WHEREAS, a passionate advocate for civil rights and social change, Matthew Shepard hoped to build a more just and caring world by inspiring others to become leaders in their communities; and

WHEREAS, after Matthew Shepard's death in 1998, his parents established the Matthew Shepard Foundation to provide support for LGBT youths and advocate for local, regional, and national programs designed to replace hate, prejudice, and bigotry with understanding, compassion, and acceptance; the foundation has touched countless lives and was instrumental in the passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act; and

WHEREAS, Matthew Shepard's life and death have inspired many works, including the documentary *Matthew Shepard is a Friend of Mine* and *The Laramie Project*, the acclaimed play by Moisés Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theater Project that has been seen by more than 30 million people and was produced by numerous theater companies across the United States in 2018, including in Virginia by the Richmond Triangle Players, Off The Rails Theatre and Essatta Art in Roanoke, and the Renaissance Theatre in Lynchburg; and

WHEREAS, the Grammy Award-winning choral ensemble Conspirare performed a national tour of Craig Hella Johnson's three-part oratorio *Considering Matthew Shepard*, which was broadcast by PBS stations to commemorate Matthew Shepard's life, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of his death in 1998; and

WHEREAS, Matthew Shepard is fondly remembered and greatly missed by his parents, Judy and Dennis; his brother, Logan; and numerous other family members 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 Matthew Wayne Shepard; 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 Matthew Wayne Shepard as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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