

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 976

Commending Ohef Sholom Temple.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 18, 2019
Agreed to by the Senate, February 23, 2019

WHEREAS, since the late 1700s, the Commonwealth of Virginia and the City of Norfolk have provided a welcoming home to Jewish residents, and one of the best-known early Jewish residents, Moses Myers, served as one of the city's most cherished early mayors; and

WHEREAS, Norfolk's Jewish population increased in the early nineteenth century, and Ohef Sholom Congregation was founded on Cumberland Street in 1844; thereafter its members worshipped in synagogues throughout downtown Norfolk; and

WHEREAS, after the tragic destruction by fire of Ohef Sholom's synagogue at Freemason Street and Monticello Avenue in February 1916, the congregation moved to the tranquil northeast corner of Raleigh Avenue and Stockley Gardens, where its new synagogue, with its neoclassical design by architects Ferguson, Calrow and Wrenn, was completed in early 1918; and

WHEREAS, on April 22, 1918, Ohef Sholom Temple was dedicated by its eloquent rabbi, Dr. Louis D. Mendoza, "as a monument to Judaism and as a monument to the Americanism of the Jewish people," with his further admonition to those assembled, "Let no unkind thought be formulated within this house, let no word that stings be spoken here; may hatred and injustice be barred; may it be an inspiration to those who seek spiritual exaltation, and may those upon whom the hand of death has been heavily laid, find comfort here"; and

WHEREAS, in that same spirit, the words of the prophet Isaiah, "MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLES," are inscribed above the Stockley Gardens doors to Ohef Sholom Temple, and the congregation strives for warm relations with communities of all faiths in Hampton Roads; and

WHEREAS, the rabbis, cantors, and congregants of Ohef Sholom Temple have for decades dedicated themselves to Reform Judaism's principle of "tikkun olam" (perfecting the world) as community leaders in education, medicine, social action, business, the arts, philanthropy, and government, contributing greatly to the social fabric of the Hampton Roads community; and

WHEREAS, the clergy and congregants of Ohef Sholom Temple have been civic leaders, strongly opposing Massive Resistance and supporting civil rights and equal rights for all, without regard to race, religion, or gender; its congregants have served on the Norfolk City Council, the Virginia House of Delegates, and the United States House of Representatives, as well as on countless municipal, state, civic, and charitable boards and commissions; and

WHEREAS, the October 2018 celebration of the 100th anniversary of Ohef Sholom's sanctuary began a year-long celebration which marks, in 2019, the 175th anniversary of the congregation's founding, making it the second-oldest Jewish congregation in Virginia and the 19th oldest congregation within American Reform Judaism; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Ohef Sholom Temple on the occasion of its 175th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Ohef Sholom Temple as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for its storied history and legacy of service to the residents of Hampton Roads.

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