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HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 134

Offered February 27, 2020

Commending the Next Move Program.

Patron—Willett

WHEREAS, for several years, the Next Move Program, a nonprofit organization in Richmond, has provided educational experiences and opportunities for vocational training to young adults with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, studies show that more than 20,000 students with special needs graduate in the Commonwealth each year but that more than two-thirds of this population are unemployed after completing their studies; and

WHEREAS, by providing employment opportunities for young men and women with disabilities, the Next Move Program helps these individuals build confidence, develop financial independence, and feel valued by their community; and

WHEREAS, a precursor of the Next Move Program was established in 2010 as an internship program operated out of Health Diagnostic Laboratory in Richmond, with program participants handling tasks that were previously managed by temporary workers; and

WHEREAS, shortly after this program began, the staff at Health Diagnostic Laboratory recognized the ways in which the program improved the company's performance and culture; employee turnover was down, mistakes resulting from the inexperience of temporary workers were eliminated, and the staff was motivated by the positive, can-do spirit of the program's participants; and

WHEREAS, the success of this program inspired its managers, Mary Townley and Elizabeth Redford, to establish the Next Move Program in 2015; incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the program has since expanded to businesses throughout the Greater Richmond and Williamsburg areas, in partnership with several area school systems; and

WHEREAS, the Next Move Program has implemented its Tablespoons Baking program since 2017 to prepare participants for entrepreneurial careers in the culinary arts; moving into a physical space in 2020, the program will not only enhance the training it can provide but become a hub for the disability community throughout the Greater Richmond area; and

WHEREAS, each year since 2017, the Next Move Program has conducted its Capable Campaign, using social media and a portrait exhibition at the Virginia Museum of History & Culture to highlight the inspirational stories of individuals thriving with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the Next Move Program presents its Pioneer Awards to recognize organizations in the Greater Richmond and Williamsburg areas that prioritize inclusivity in their hiring and training practices, promoting a welcoming and supportive work culture for all; and

WHEREAS, the accomplishments of the Next Move Program are the result of the dedication of its staff, the hard work of its participants, and the overwhelming support of its various partners throughout the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the Next Move Program, an organization facilitating the growth and development of young adults with disabilities, hereby be commended for its many years of service to the community; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare copies of this resolution for presentation to Mary Townley and Elizabeth Redford, cofounders of the Next Move Program, as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration for the organization's work to prepare countless Virginians for success in their chosen careers.

INTRODUCED

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