

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 149

Commending Dennis Ellmer.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 27, 2020
 Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 2, 2020

WHEREAS, Dennis Ellmer, president and chief executive officer of Priority Automotive Group in Chesapeake, has recently received local, regional, and national praise for the Priority Inmate Technician Training Program he initiated in 2018, the first program of its kind in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Dennis Ellmer's career in the auto industry spans more than 40 years; he founded Priority Automotive Group in 1998 with two dealerships and has since grown his business into one of the 50 largest dealership groups nationwide, adding many new car franchises in locations throughout Virginia and North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, an active and dedicated member of his community, Dennis Ellmer has used his success in business to help create a better world; in partnership with the Norfolk Sheriff's Office, Tidewater Community College, and Governor Ralph Northam, he spearheaded the creation of the Priority Inmate Technician Training Program, providing a pathway for former inmates to obtain quality jobs at his Priority Toyota Chesapeake dealership; and

WHEREAS, an early pioneer of jail inmate training programs in the country, the Priority Inmate Technician Training Program is designed to fill the need for trained auto technicians, reduce repeat offenses and recidivism, and give those who have been incarcerated a fresh start in a growing industry upon their release; and

WHEREAS, Dennis Ellmer and Priority Automotive Group have invested more than \$1 million to establish the Priority Inmate Technician Training Program, earning national recognition from Toyota Motor Corporation and becoming a template for other inmate training programs throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, in February 2020, Dennis Ellmer was presented the Dealer Education Award from Northwood University, a premier educational institution for automotive marketing and management; he was also the recipient of the 2019 Distinguished Service Medal as Norfolk's First Citizen in Civic Affairs, presented by the Norfolk Cosmopolitan Club in recognition of his commitment to his community; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, Akio Toyoda, President of Toyota Motor Corporation, presented Dennis Ellmer and Priority Automotive Group with the Best in Town Award, a national honor presented to only one Toyota dealership in the United States each year, in recognition of the accomplishments of the Priority Inmate Technician Training Program; and

WHEREAS, Dennis Ellmer has served his industry as an active member of the Virginia Automobile Dealers Association and the Hampton Roads Automobile Dealers Association, including service as a member of the Board of Directors for both organizations; and

WHEREAS, an active and dedicated member of his industry, Dennis Ellmer has served his customers and community with a generous spirit and been an example to dealers throughout the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly commend Dennis Ellmer, president and chief executive officer of Priority Automotive Group, for his dedication to his community; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Dennis Ellmer as an expression of the General Assembly's congratulations and best wishes.

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