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## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 225

Offered March 2, 2020

*Celebrating the life of Matthew Wayne Shepard.*

Patron—Ebbin

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, Matthew Wayne Shepard, an openly gay student at the University of Wyoming whose memory inspired a legacy of support for LGBTQ communities in the United States through grassroots advocacy and other responses such as *The Laramie Project*, died tragically on October 12, 1998; 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 LGBTQ 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 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 in the United States and around the world; the play has received scores of awards and was hailed by *The New York Times* as "one of the best plays of the last 25 years"; and

WHEREAS, *The Laramie Project*, which premiered February 26, 2000, in Denver, Colorado, has been produced by numerous theater companies throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia, including recent productions by the Richmond Triangle Players, Off The Rails Theatre and Essatta Art of Roanoke, and The Renaissance Theater in Lynchburg; and

WHEREAS, the Tectonic Theater Project and the Matthew Shepard Foundation are creating a retrospective celebrating and honoring performances of the play that have impacted artists and fostered important conversations in communities around the world; 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 Senate, the House of Delegates 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 Senate 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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