

## 2020 SPECIAL SESSION I

ENROLLED

### SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 567

*Celebrating the life of Saba Labib Shami.*

Agreed to by the Senate, October 16, 2020

WHEREAS, Saba Labib Shami, a highly respected public servant and leader of the Arab American community, passed away surrounded by his family on September 17, 2020; and

WHEREAS, Saba Labib Shami was born an indigenous Christian Palestinian on April 15, 1955, in the village of Maghar and grew up and went to school in the City of Haifa, which is near where Jesus Christ grew up in Galilee, while he and his father worked as painters; and

WHEREAS, while attending high school in Haifa, Saba Labib Shami organized against his school's segregation of Jews and Palestinians, leading to his expulsion from the Israeli education system in its entirety for doing so; and

WHEREAS, Saba Labib Shami moved to the United States, settling first in Indiana, so that he could complete high school and then earn a bachelor's degree in social sciences from Goshen College; he studied philosophy and peace studies at Bethany Theological Seminary, and many years later, he graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University's Virginia Executive Institute; and

WHEREAS, in 1983, Saba Labib Shami moved to the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Area, where he would work as the Director of Marketing and Assistant Editor of the publication *Arab Traveler*, as vice president of business development at the Bank of Northern Virginia in Arlington, and as principal at Washington Works, LLC, a public affairs firm; and

WHEREAS, Saba Labib Shami then moved into public service in local and state government by working as the Chief Deputy Commissioner for the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; Director of the Virginia Taskforce for Business Development with the Near East; Special Assistant to the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, where he founded the Office of Outreach and served as its first director; Director of Special Projects for the Virginia Port Authority; Chief Deputy Director of the Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation; member of the Virginia Small Business Advisory Board; and member of the Board of Directors of Arlington Home Ownership Made Easier (AHOME); and

WHEREAS, Saba Labib Shami assisted and served Senator and Governor Tim Kaine, Senator and Governor Mark Warner, Congressman Jim Moran, Congressman and Lieutenant Governor Don Beyer, and many other Virginia local and state elected officials; and

WHEREAS, Saba Labib Shami also founded and sat on the board of directors for a number of charities and political action committees, including The Galilee Fund, New Dominion PAC, and the Virginia Coalition for Human Rights; and

WHEREAS, Saba Labib Shami pursued a lifelong commitment to advocacy for peace and justice, including equal rights and human rights for the Palestinian and Israeli people; and

WHEREAS, Saba Labib Shami spoke many dialects of Arabic, which made him a very popular speaker at Arab American functions, including annual candidate forums, as well as in print and on television; and

WHEREAS, Saba Labib Shami is survived by his wife, Amira Mazzawi Shami; his sons, Amir and Yousef; and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of Virginia hereby note with great sadness the loss of Saba Labib Shami, who dedicated years of exemplary service to many communities and citizens of Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate of Virginia prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Saba Labib Shami as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's respect for his memory and admiration for his extraordinary dedication to human rights and justice.

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