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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 660

Offered January 29, 2021

Commending Danny TK Avula, M.D.

Patrons—VanValkenburg, Adams, D.M., Aird, Ayala, Bourne, Carr, Convirs-Fowler, Delaney, Filler-Corn, Gooditis, Guzman, Helmer, Herring, Keam, Kory, Krizek, Levine, Mugler, Mullin, Murphy, Plum, Rasoul, Reid, Roem, Sickles, Simon, Simonds, Subramanyam, Sullivan, Tran, Tyler, Watts and Willett; Senator: Barker

WHEREAS, Danny TK Avula, M.D., director of the Richmond City and Henrico County Health Districts under the Virginia Department of Health, has provided an invaluable service to the Commonwealth by advising its leaders and supporting its citizens throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, from a young age, Danny Avula knew he wanted to become a physician and care for others; after earning a bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia and completing a medical degree and pediatric residency at Virginia Commonwealth University, this commitment blossomed into a desire to address the social determinants of disease more fully as a public health practitioner; and

WHEREAS, after finishing a master's degree in public health and a preventive medicine residency at Johns Hopkins University, Danny Avula became deputy director of the Richmond City Health District in 2009, rising to the position of director seven years later; and

WHEREAS, during Danny Avula's tenure with the Richmond City Health District, the city has made great strides toward promoting health and mitigating disease; one major accomplishment was the creation of eight health resource centers in public housing communities throughout the city, a network that has proved vital to the department's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020; and

WHEREAS, after two years as an interim director of the Henrico County Health District, Danny Avula was asked to formally assume leadership of the department in 2018 while maintaining his position with the Richmond City Health District; this unprecedented arrangement has led to greater coordination between the two localities, bolstering the region's ability to address public health challenges both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, as the top public health official in Richmond and Henrico County, many have looked to Danny Avula for guidance throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; with an approach that emphasizes data analysis and transparency, he has become a trusted and indispensable source of information for both local leaders and area residents; and

WHEREAS, under Danny Avula's leadership, more than 350 employees with the Richmond City and Henrico County Health Districts have addressed the COVID-19 pandemic by implementing large-scale testing events, staffing a call center that fields more than 500 calls per day, carrying out contact tracing operations and other investigations, providing support to long-term care facilities facing outbreaks, and analyzing data to furnish quality information to leaders and the public; and

WHEREAS, with a keen understanding of the socioeconomic factors that impact health outcomes, Danny Avula has been an unwavering advocate for vulnerable populations throughout the pandemic, working closely with local and state leaders to protect frontline workers, low-income families, and the elderly; and

WHEREAS, along with leading Richmond and Henrico County's public health efforts, Danny Avula continues to serve as an affiliate faculty member at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, preparing future generations of physicians to be more socially conscious and grounded in the communities they serve; and

WHEREAS, Danny Avula's service to the Commonwealth extends beyond his role with the Virginia Department of Health, as he has served on the State Board of Social Services since 2013, chairing the board from 2017 to 2019; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his extraordinary work on behalf of Richmond and Henrico County during the COVID-19 pandemic, Danny Avula was named the 2020 Richmonder of the Year by *Style Weekly*; he was a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* Person of the Year honoree in 2019 and a recent recipient of the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities' Humanitarian Award; and

WHEREAS, in January 2021, Governor Ralph Northam appointed Danny Avula to oversee the Commonwealth's COVID-19 vaccine rollout, ensuring the able administration of this urgent public health initiative; and

WHEREAS, Danny Avula is a visionary and inspirational leader who has risen masterfully to the challenges of this historic public health crisis; his selfless and indefatigable efforts in support of his community are a reminder to all of what makes the Commonwealth a wonderful place to live; now,

INTRODUCED

HJ660

56 therefore, be it

57 RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby
58 commend Danny TK Avula, M.D., director of the Richmond City and Henrico County Health Districts
59 under the Virginia Department of Health, for tirelessly endeavoring to protect citizens of the
60 Commonwealth throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; and, be it

61 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution
62 for presentation to Danny TK Avula, M.D., as an expression of the General Assembly's profound
63 admiration and respect for his heroic service.