

2021 SPECIAL SESSION I

INTRODUCED

21103816D

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 685

Offered February 1, 2021

Celebrating the life of Larry Jerome Bland.

Patrons—Carr (By Request), Adams, D.M., Bagby, Bourne and McQuinn; Senator: McClellan

WHEREAS, Larry Jerome Bland, an esteemed music director and beloved member of the Richmond community, died on November 13, 2020; and

WHEREAS, raised in Richmond, Larry Bland was a graduate of Maggie L. Walker High School and later earned a degree in vocal music education from Virginia State University (VSU), where he founded the VSU Gospel Chorale; and

WHEREAS, harmonizing his deep and abiding faith with his passionate love for music, Larry Bland served as the longtime creative director of The Volunteer Choir at Second Baptist Church in Richmond; and

WHEREAS, Larry Bland led The Volunteer Choir, which was formed in 1968, for 44 years over two separate tenures, producing three albums and several singles that will always be cherished by fans; and

WHEREAS, Larry Bland brought a new style of gospel choir performance to The Volunteer Choir, where members wore tuxedos and evening gowns and moved in a precision choreographed style as they sang; he included drums, keyboards, and brass as an early adopter of using such instruments to enliven performances; and

WHEREAS, as a testament to The Volunteer Choir's prominence in the community, the group welcomed Queen Elizabeth II during Her Majesty's visit to Richmond in 2007, appeared with the Richmond Symphony, and performed at various summer festivals and events year after year; and

WHEREAS, Larry Bland stepped away from The Volunteer Choir briefly while pursuing work in Washington, D.C., but the group's magnetism kept him commuting to Richmond regularly for several years, and he soon returned permanently, leading the group until its final performance on December 30, 2018, at a commemoration of its 50th anniversary; and

WHEREAS, Larry Bland's gift for the performing arts extended to the theater, and he was involved in multiple stage productions at the Haymarket Theatre in Mechanicsville in the 1970s and 1980s, including a 1976 production of *Purlie* that earned him a Phoebe Award from Richmond theater critic Roy Proctor; and

WHEREAS, Larry Bland worked tirelessly for various organizations throughout his career, including an entertainment law office in Washington, D.C., the Discovery Channel, the *Richmond Free Press*, and the Richmond Department of Justice Services; and

WHEREAS, Larry Bland will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by his aunt Barbara; his nephews, Prince, Keith, and Pierre; and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Larry Jerome Bland, revered music director of Richmond's The Volunteer Choir, whose kindness, visionary leadership, and positivity touched countless lives; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Larry Jerome Bland as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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