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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 768

Offered February 2, 2021

Celebrating the life of Avicia Beatrice Hooper Thorpe.

Patrons—Marshall and Adams, L.R.; Senators: Ruff and Stanley

WHEREAS, Avicia Beatrice Hooper Thorpe, an esteemed educator and beloved member of the Danville community who at the time of her passing was the oldest living citizen of the Commonwealth, died on December 24, 2020; and

WHEREAS, Avicia Thorpe was born in Schoolfield in 1908, more than four decades before the mill village would be annexed by the City of Danville; and

WHEREAS, despite being barred from the all-white school in her neighborhood, Avicia Thorpe persisted in getting an education, walking every day to a one-room schoolhouse that was located several miles away from her home; and

WHEREAS, ultimately completing her secondary education at Holbrook Presbyterian School in Danville, where she was valedictorian, Avicia Thorpe then graduated as salutatorian from Bluefield State College with a degree in social sciences; and

WHEREAS, Avicia Thorpe began her distinguished career in education at Westmoreland High School in Danville, teaching English there from 1933 to 1936; she then joined the faculty at the newly established John M. Langston High School in Danville in 1936, where she worked until her retirement in 1966; and

WHEREAS, teaching in a Black school during the Jim Crow era, Avicia Thorpe triumphed against adversity to ensure that her students would succeed both in and out of the classroom; and

WHEREAS, Avicia Thorpe founded a journalism program at John M. Langston High School and the school's newspaper, *The Langstonian*, which earned honors from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association; and

WHEREAS, Avicia Thorpe acquired a life membership in the NAACP during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, which provided funds to pay legal costs and attorney fees for activists involved in local demonstrations; she remained active in the organization and at the time of her passing was one of its oldest and longest-serving members; and

WHEREAS, Avicia Thorpe has received numerous awards and accolades in her lifetime, including a Teacher of the Year award from John M. Langston High School and the 1982 NAACP Citizen of the Year award; she became the first diamond member of Alpha Phi Omega with 75 years of service; and

WHEREAS, guided throughout her life by her deep and abiding faith, Avicia Thorpe enjoyed worship and fellowship with the community at Trinity Baptist Church in Danville, where she helped lead the congregation alongside her husband, the Reverend C.M. Thorpe, for many years; and

WHEREAS, preceded in death by her loving husband, C.M., Avicia Thorpe will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by her great-niece, Adele, 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 Avicia Beatrice Hooper Thorpe, an accomplished educator and supercentenarian of Danville whose unwavering kindness, generosity, and dedication to her community 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 Avicia Beatrice Hooper Thorpe as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for her memory.

INTRODUCED

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