

2022 SESSION

INTRODUCED

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SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 65

Offered March 10, 2022

Commending The Birchmere.

Patrons—Ebbin, Barker, Boysko, Favola, McPike, Saslaw and Surovell

WHEREAS, for more than 55 years, The Birchmere, owned by Gary Oelze and now located in Alexandria, has delighted audiences as one of the premier music and comedy clubs in the Commonwealth and the United States; and

WHEREAS, Gary Oelze, a Kentucky native, former musician, United States Air Force veteran, and successful restaurateur, cofounded The Birchmere with the late William Hooper in 1966; the original location was near the Pentagon and primarily served government workers and members of the military; and

WHEREAS, Gary Oelze began booking bluegrass and folk musicians on Wednesday and Saturday nights, and the performances were so well received by the community that The Birchmere became a full-time music venue by 1975; and

WHEREAS, The Birchmere moved to a new location in Alexandria in 1981 and settled in its current location on Mount Vernon Avenue in Alexandria in 1996; the club offers shows from an array of musical genres, including country, rock, soul, jazz, and rhythm and blues, and also features comedy programs; and

WHEREAS, over the years, The Birchmere has hosted more than 14,000 performances and thousands of bands and musical artists, with big names like Little Richard, Johnny Cash, Rosanne Cash, Arlo Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Keiko Matsui, Emmylou Harris, Lyle Lovett, Buddy Guy, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Townes Van Zandt, Steve Earle, Shawn Colvin, Sir George Martin, and John Waters; and

WHEREAS, Grammy Award-winning country artist Vince Gill got his start playing at The Birchmere when he was 17 years old, and the legendary Ray Charles performed his final live show at The Birchmere; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, The Birchmere commemorated its 55th anniversary with the release of an illustrated history book, *All Roads Lead to the Birchmere: America's Legendary Music Hall*; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, That The Birchmere hereby be commended on the occasion of its 55th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Gary Oelze, owner of The Birchmere, as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's admiration for the venue's contributions to cultural life in Northern Virginia.

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