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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 744

Offered February 4, 2015

Commending Lorraine Payne Williams.

Patrons—Toscano and McClellan; Senator: Deeds

WHEREAS, Lorraine Payne Williams of Charlottesville, a retired teacher, a community leader, and an advocate for civil rights, was honored on November 5, 2014, as a Paul Harris Fellow by the Blue Ridge Mountains Rotary Club for her leadership, vision, and support, especially in her work to remove racial barriers and provide affordable housing; and

WHEREAS, a native of Ivy, Lorraine Payne attended Terry Elementary School and Jefferson High School in Charlottesville, both of which were segregated; she received a bachelor's degree from Hampton Institute, now Hampton University and later earned a master's degree from the University of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Lorraine Payne married Eugene Williams and became a teacher; she taught hundreds of children from Charlottesville and Albemarle County during a long and distinguished career; and

WHEREAS, in the mid-1950s, Lorraine Williams and her husband, who was president of the Charlottesville Branch of the NAACP, formed a committee of parents to integrate the Charlottesville Public Schools; the group won a lawsuit that ordered the public schools to desegregate, but the school system closed rather than comply with the court order; and

WHEREAS, when the Charlottesville Public Schools reopened in 1962, the Williams' two daughters, Karol and Scheryl, ages 10 and 8 respectively, were enrolled at and escorted by police to formerly all-white schools; years later, their daughter Scheryl was named Homecoming Queen at Lane High School, which was less than 10 percent African American; and

WHEREAS, recognizing that community involvement can improve people's lives, Lorraine Williams joined and served as president of the Charlottesville Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.; the group promotes human welfare through established community programs; and

WHEREAS, Lorraine Williams formed Dogwood Housing with her husband and other family members to maintain and improve the inventory of affordable housing in Charlottesville; the company bought 62 housing units and renovated them, creating attractive and affordable housing in the city; and

WHEREAS, for many years, Lorraine Williams and her husband took a personal interest in their tenants, encouraging them to work hard so that they could advance and become homeowners; they owned the successful property management company until they sold it in 2007; and

WHEREAS, Lorraine Williams has devoted much of her life to erasing segregation and helping the less fortunate in Charlottesville; her work epitomizes Rotary's motto of "Service Above Self"; and

WHEREAS, Lorraine Williams, interested in serving others, was a Charter member of the Charlottesville Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, a volunteer service organization of extraordinary women committed to enriching, sustaining, and ensuring the culture and economic survival of African Americans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Lorraine Payne Williams of Charlottesville, a retired teacher, community leader, and civil rights advocate, who was named a Paul Harris Fellow by the Blue Ridge Mountains Rotary Club for her work to remove racial barriers and provide affordable housing; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Lorraine Payne Williams as an expression of the General Assembly's great respect and admiration for her unwavering determination to right a wrong and provide equal opportunity for all people.

INTRODUCED

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