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SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 139

Offered February 8, 2017

Commending the Mathomank Village Tribe.

Patron—Lucas

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the Mathomank Village Tribe has a rich heritage in what is now Isle of Wight County, and its members have made many valuable contributions to life in the Commonwealth over the course of more than 445 years of documented history; and

WHEREAS, the Mathomank Village Tribe traces its roots to the village of Mathomank, the capital of the Warraskoyack Tribe, which was one of the 30 tribes forming the Powhatan Empire; the tribe's territory was located south of James River, and Warraskoyack means "point at the end of a river" in the Algonquian language; and

WHEREAS, in 1571, a missionary named Robert Poole settled on Mulberry Island in Warraskoyack territory; after the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in France in 1572, many French Huguenots fled to the area as refugees, and Robert Poole established the Rushmere community in 1582; and

WHEREAS, in 1607, the English explorer John Smith encountered the Warraskoyack Tribe while mapping the shore of the James River, and he was welcomed into Mathomank when he returned to the area in 1608, 1610, and 1611; and

WHEREAS, during the Anglo-Powhatan Wars, Mathomank was burned and destroyed by the English in 1622, but many of its inhabitants fled away from the shorelines and sought shelter with other tribes; Chippokes Plantation State Park is named after a respected chief of the Quioughcohannock who was killed during the massacre at Mathomank; and

WHEREAS, the Hughes family arrived in the area in 1624, and by 1642, members of the Bailey, Hughes, Johnson, King, Poole, and Rowlett families served as interpreters in the area and lived among the Native Americans in what had by then been renamed as Isle of Wight County; and

WHEREAS, around this time, John King and others successfully negotiated on behalf of the Warraskoyack Tribe to achieve licenses allowing the members of the tribe to farm, fish, and hunt freely in the area; and

WHEREAS, in the late 1600s, Isle of Wight County adopted the Act of Tolerance to allow cohabitation between Native Americans and European settlers, and the inhabitants of the reformed Mathomank village embraced their cultural diversity, incorporating traditional practices with new techniques and technologies from the English and the French; in 1690, Ferguson Wharf was established as the Warraskoyack port at Mathomank; and

WHEREAS, members of the Warraskoyack Tribe taught E. M. Todd the art of preserving hog products with salt, and the information spread throughout the local settlements, giving rise to the region's proud tradition in ham production that endures to this day; and

WHEREAS, during the Revolutionary War, French maps identified the Village of Warrasqueak and Warrasqueak Bay, variations of Warraskoyack, as being separate from Isle of Wight County and Smithfield; and

WHEREAS, between the 1600s and 1800s, the area had one of the largest populations of free Native Americans and African Americans in the country, and during the Civil War, the Hughes family played a pivotal role on the Underground Railroad; and

WHEREAS, the history and heritage of the Warraskoyack Tribe became harder to trace as a result of the Dawes Commission, when some members of the tribe were converted to the Civilized Virginia Cherokee Roll and remained in the area and others were sent to the Midwest on the Trail of Tears; during the 1920s, the vital records of many Native American residents in the area were tampered with and changed to read "black"; and

WHEREAS, many descendants of the Warraskoyack Tribe who continued to live in the area worked as watermen and oyster farmers in and around Mathomank; after the devastation of Hurricane Hazel in the 1950s and the kepone spill in the James River in the 1970s, many local residents turned to shipbuilding to make their living; and

WHEREAS, many current residents of Isle of Wight County and Surry County can trace their lineage through documentation, pictures, and DNA research to indigenous Native Americans or early European settlers and African Americans who lived in the area, and they still hold positions of authority and make valuable contributions to the community just as they did hundreds of years ago; and

WHEREAS, in 2003, when Isle of Wight County sought to remove the remaining watermen to

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59 develop a private marina, in violation of the Treaty of 1646, which prevented development within five
60 miles of a Native American town, the Rushmere Community Development Corporation organized
61 descendants of the Quioughcohannock and Warraskoyack tribes to preserve their heritage in the area;
62 and

63 WHEREAS, the National Park Service awarded Rushmere Community Development Corporation a
64 technical assistance grant to validate the remnants of the Quioughcohannock and Warraskoyack tribes
65 and preserve their way of life; and

66 WHEREAS, in 2014, the Mathomank Village Tribe was incorporated in Isle of Wight County,
67 comprising the living descendants of the members of the Quioughcohannock and Warraskoyack tribes,
68 and in 2016, the Mathomank Village Tribal Council petitioned for official recognition as a tribe; and

69 WHEREAS, the members of the Mathomank Village Tribe are Rosa Holmes-Turner, Thomas
70 Hughes, Jane Hill-Hughes, John King, Elizabeth Bailey, William Howlet, Sidney Johnson, Otelia
71 Holloway, Cheryl Rowlett-Dotson, John Rowlett, Owcie Rowlett, Maude Lillian Bailey, Ernest Poole,
72 Payton Jones, Jr., Louie Wilson, Jr., and Michael Young; now, therefore, be it

73 RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, That the Mathomank Village Tribe hereby be commended for
74 its many contributions to Isle of Wight County and the Commonwealth; and, be it

75 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for
76 presentation to Rose Holmes-Turner, chief of the Mathomank Village Tribe, as an expression of the
77 Senate of Virginia's admiration for the tribe's unique place in the history of Virginia and the early
78 United States.