

2019 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 902

Commending Laura Seltzer-Duny.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 18, 2019
Agreed to by the Senate, February 23, 2019

WHEREAS, Laura Seltzer-Duny, a filmmaker in Newport News, produced the documentary *Nobody Wants Us* to highlight the important work of the late Jacob L. Morewitz, an advocate for a group of refugees fleeing Nazi persecution in 1940; and

WHEREAS, Laura Seltzer-Duny's documentary uses contemporary interviews, dramatic recreations, and archival photos and film clips to tell the story of the SS *Quanza*, which departed Europe in August 1940 with more than 300 passengers, many of whom were refugees; and

WHEREAS, 86 of the refugees, most of them Belgian Jews, were initially denied entry to the United States and Mexico, and the ship had docked at Sewell's Point in Norfolk to restock its coal supply before returning to Europe; and

WHEREAS, the plight of the refugees drew the attention of Jacob L. Morewitz, a maritime attorney and a relative of Laura Seltzer-Duny, who filed multiple lawsuits and used his legal expertise to delay the ship's departure; and

WHEREAS, the decisive actions taken by Jacob L. Morewitz gave activists time to raise awareness of the situation, eventually reaching Eleanor Roosevelt, who entreated her husband, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, to investigate the status of the passengers; and

WHEREAS, thanks to Jacob L. Morewitz's efforts, all 86 people remaining aboard the SS *Quanza* were allowed to stay in the United States; they were among the last refugees allowed into the country until after the end of World War II; and

WHEREAS, Laura Seltzer-Duny's inspirational documentary, which demonstrates the difference that one determined person can make in the lives of others, premiered at the United Jewish Community of the Virginia Peninsula in Newport News on January 12, 2019; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Laura Seltzer-Duny on the premiere of her documentary *Nobody Wants Us*; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Laura Seltzer-Duny as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for her work in preserving the memory of this unique episode in the history of Norfolk and the Commonwealth.

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