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## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 473

Offered February 18, 2019

*Commending Equality Virginia.*

Patrons—Ebbin, Barker, Boysko, Dance, Deeds, Dunnavant, Edwards, Favola, Howell, Lewis, Locke, Lucas, Marsden, Mason, McClellan, McPike, Petersen, Saslaw, Spruill, Stuart, Sturtevant, Surovell and Wagner; Delegates: Adams, D.M., Ayala, Bagby, Bell, John J., Bulova, Convirs-Fowler, Delaney, Heretick, Herring, Hope, Keam, Kory, Levine, Lindsey, Rasoul, Rodman, Sickles and Sullivan

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, Equality Virginia, a statewide organization that advocates for equal treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Virginians, celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2019; and

WHEREAS, originally known as Virginians for Justice, Equality Virginia was founded in 1989 as a nonpartisan advocacy group that provides outreach, education, and analysis on issues affecting the community; and

WHEREAS, Equality Virginia is made up of three separate groups: Equality Virginia Political Action Committee, Equality Virginia Advocates, and Equality Virginia; and

WHEREAS, since 2006, Equality Virginia has provided the educational and advocacy foundation for the successful passage of bills that authorized Virginia businesses to offer health and life insurance benefits to domestic partners; and

WHEREAS, Equality Virginia has also championed bills to give patients the right to name who can visit them in the hospital; established anti-bullying policy requirements; and established a statewide directory of advanced medical directives giving health care providers who care for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) patients easy access to essential documents, including partner medical power of attorney forms, in times of crisis; and

WHEREAS, in addition, Equality Virginia has successfully defeated bills that would have banned gay adoption, exempted the Virginia National Guard from complying with the repeal of "Don't Ask Don't Tell," allowed for individuals to discriminate against same-gender couples, and required transgender students to use the incorrect public accommodations; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, Equality Virginia worked with Governors Mark Warner, Tim Kaine, Terry McAuliffe, and Ralph Northam to sign Executive Order One, protecting all state employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; this made Virginia the first southern state where gay and transgender people are protected at a statewide level; and

WHEREAS, in a post-marriage equality environment, Equality Virginia's strategy for achieving full-lived and legal equality includes: increasing visibility for transgender Virginians, engaging the business community, connecting with Virginia's leaders, and protecting Virginia's LGBT youth; and

WHEREAS, to increase transgender visibility, Equality Virginia's Transgender Advocates are meeting with people in their communities to share their stories, write blogs, and create videos; through Equality Virginia's Transgender Advocates Speakers Bureau program, communities have an opportunity to connect with transgender individuals through storytelling and candid dialogue; and

WHEREAS, through the annual Equality Virginia Transgender Information and Empowerment Summit, hundreds of people come together to learn about resources, participate in workshops, and take new information back to their communities; and

WHEREAS, to engage the business community, Equality Virginia has created the Virginia Competes and Equality Means Business to highlight large and small businesses that respect and value the diversity of their customers and employees; and

WHEREAS, to protect LGBT youth, Equality Virginia works with school boards and communities throughout Virginia to increase the number of Virginia's LGBTQ students who are protected by fully enumerated bullying policies; students who feel protected from discrimination at school perform better, stay in school, and are more likely to graduate; Equality Virginia will continue this work until all public school children attend a school that respects and protects all students; and

WHEREAS, Equality Virginia's purpose is to change hearts and minds through advocacy, public education, and outreach efforts and create a landscape in Virginia where all LGBT individuals can experience full-lived and legal equality; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Equality Virginia, a statewide organization that advocates for equal treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Virginians, on the occasion of its 30th anniversary; and, be it

INTRODUCED

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55       RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for  
56 presentation to Equality Virginia as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the  
57 organization's dedication to equality for all Virginians and best wishes in the future.