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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 116

Offered February 11, 2020

Commending the Reverend Thurman Echols.

Patron—Stanley

WHEREAS, the Reverend Thurman Echols, a leader of the Henry County community and longtime pastor at Moral Hill Baptist Church in Axton, retired in 2019; and

WHEREAS, coming of age in Danville during the civil rights movement, Thurman Echols was on the front lines in the fight to end segregation and secure equality and freedom for all; as a young activist leader, he was arrested during the events now known as Bloody Monday, demonstrating a fervor for righteousness that would stay with him throughout his life; and

WHEREAS, shortly after graduating with a degree in sociology from Virginia Union University, Thurman Echols was drafted, serving in the United States Armed Forces as a medic at Fort Knox, Fort Sam Houston, and Fort Jackson; and

WHEREAS, following his service, Thurman Echols briefly worked as a community-school coordinator before becoming inspired to join the ministry and embarking on a religious education that would span decades; and

WHEREAS, studying initially at Duke University Divinity School and ultimately earning a master of divinity degree from Shaw Divinity School in the 1980s, Thurman Echols was the recipient of honorary doctorates from several institutions throughout his career, including Virginia Union University; and

WHEREAS, assuming leadership of the congregation at Moral Hill Baptist Church in 1976, Thurman Echols led countless parishioners in faith and worship for nearly a half-century; during his tenure, the church vastly expanded in size and developed new programs to better serve the community; and

WHEREAS, Thurman Echols was a leader beyond his church as well, serving as president or chair of several organizations and boards, including the Virginia State Baptist Convention, the Axton Life Saving Crew, the Martinsville-Henry County branch of the NAACP, the Piedmont Arts Association, the Martinsville and Henry County United Way, and the Henry County Social Services Board; and

WHEREAS, recognized for his wisdom and acumen, Thurman Echols was a gubernatorial appointee to the Commonwealth's Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect and appointed by the Henry County Board of Supervisors to serve as a board member of Pittsylvania County Community Action, a position he held for 25 years; and

WHEREAS, Thurman Echols' efforts on behalf of his community have been acknowledged through numerous awards and distinctions, including the 2007 Jack Dalton Community Service Award from the Henry County Board of Supervisors, the 1998 Citizen of the Year Award from the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., and keys to the Cities of Roanoke, Danville, and Virginia Beach; and

WHEREAS, Thurman Echols has impacted countless lives with his good words and deeds, both through his stewardship of Moral Hill Baptist Church and his numerous civic affiliations, demonstrating a tireless dedication to serving others; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Reverend Thurman Echols, long-standing pastor of Moral Hill Baptist Church and pillar of the Henry County community, on the occasion of his retirement; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Reverend Thurman Echols as an expression of the General Assembly's profound respect and heartfelt admiration for his contributions to Henry County and the Commonwealth.

INTRODUCED

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