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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 626

Offered February 7, 2023

Commending Sappony Baptist Church.

Patron—Wachsmann

WHEREAS, Sappony Baptist Church in Sussex County's Stony Creek, one of the oldest Baptist churches in the Commonwealth, has provided spiritual leadership, opportunities for joyful worship, and support for generous community outreach and mission programs for 250 years; and

WHEREAS, originally known as Sappony Meeting House, Sappony Baptist Church was established in 1773 by two elders who wished to create a Baptist church in the area, John Rivers and Issac Robinson, with John Rivers becoming the church's first pastor; the church predates by the incorporation of Stony Creek as a town by more than 100 years; and

WHEREAS, Sappony Baptist Church played a role in the development of religious liberty in the early days of the Commonwealth and cultivated fellowship between the two major groups of Baptists in the region, Separatists and Regular Baptists, with Sappony Baptist Church being Regular Baptist; and

WHEREAS, Sappony Baptist Church was originally part of the Kehukee Association, which was based in North Carolina, but by 1791, the Baptist community in the Commonwealth had grown significantly, and Sappony Baptist Church became one of the 21 founding churches in the Portsmouth Baptist Association; and

WHEREAS, the Portsmouth Baptist Association helped establish the Baptist General Association of Virginia in 1823, further supporting the growth and development of the local Baptist community; and

WHEREAS, during the Civil War, Sappony Baptist Church hosted one of only two meetings held by the Portsmouth Baptist Association for the duration of the war; in 1864, the sanctuary sustained damage during the Battle of Sappony Church, some of which is still visible, including holes from cannonballs and the altar Bible that was shot; during the battle the sanctuary served as a hospital; and

WHEREAS, after the war, the Portsmouth Baptist Association continued to thrive and needed to be divided into smaller associations; as a member of Portsmouth Baptist Association, Sappony Baptist Church became one of the 21 founding churches in the Petersburg Baptist Association and remains a member of the association to this day; and

WHEREAS, the original Sappony Baptist Church building is still intact and has been modernized and enhanced numerous times over the years; the building was wired for electricity in 1943, construction for an education building began in 1953, the pulpit area was remodeled and new choir and baptismal areas were added in 1957, and vinyl siding was installed in 1976; and

WHEREAS, Sappony Baptist Church supports state and national missionary work through the Southern Baptist Convention and has enhanced the quality of life in Sussex County and the Commonwealth by supporting ministries to feed the homeless and the less fortunate in Petersburg, and providing Christmas gifts and school supplies to children; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Sappony Baptist Church on the occasion of its 250th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Sappony Baptist Church as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the church's contributions to the Stony Creek community and the growth of the Baptist faith in the Commonwealth.

INTRODUCED

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