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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 716

Offered February 16, 2023

*Commending Darden's Country Store.*

Patrons—Brewer; Senator: Cosgrove

WHEREAS, Darden's Country Store, a beloved purveyor of salt-cured Smithfield-style country ham located along Bowling Green Road in Isle of Wight County, celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2022; and

WHEREAS, established in 1952 by Seward and Vivian Darden, Darden's Country Store had been owned and operated since 1982 by their son Tommy, who passed away in 2022, and his wife, DeeDee; and

WHEREAS, though some of the merchandise at Darden's Country Store changed over the years, Tommy and DeeDee Darden preserved many family traditions to maintain what is one of the last home-based, commercial ham-curing operations in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Tommy and DeeDee Darden managed Darden's Country Store along with a farm spanning several hundred acres, where they have grown peanuts, corn, cotton, soybeans, wheat, and pumpkins and raised a variety of livestock; and

WHEREAS, at the heart of the Darden's Country Store operation is the smokehouse built by Seward Darden in the 1950s, where upwards of 1,000 finely cured and smoked hams are produced each year; and

WHEREAS, patrons have been returning to Darden's Country Store time and again over generations for the array of high-quality ham products the store has to offer, including its world-class ham biscuit; and

WHEREAS, Darden's Country Store has drawn the attention and praise of both local and national media, appearing in *Southern Living*, *Virginia Living*, *Hampton Roads Magazine*, and *The New York Times* and on an episode of The Food Network's "Tyler's Ultimate"; and

WHEREAS, Darden's Country Store and its famed ham products represent an important aspect of the history and culture of the Commonwealth and are a reminder of why Virginia is a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Darden's Country Store on the occasion of its 70th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Darden's Country Store as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the store's history of contributions to the Commonwealth.

INTRODUCED

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