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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 756

Offered February 17, 2023

Commending Amina Luqman-Dawson.

Patrons—Lopez, Bennett-Parker, Carr, Guzman, Hope, Kory, Murphy, Rasoul, Seibold, Simonds, Sullivan and Watts; Senators: Boysko, Ebbin, Edwards, Favola, Howell and Spruill

WHEREAS, Amina Luqman-Dawson, an accomplished author based in Arlington, won both the John Newbery Medal and the Coretta Scott King Book Award, both from the American Library Association, in 2023 for her debut novel, *Freewater*; and

WHEREAS, the John Newbery Medal is annually presented by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association, to "the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children"; the Coretta Scott King Book Award is given annually "to outstanding African American authors and illustrators of books for children and young adults"; Amina Luqman-Dawson holds the distinction of being the first woman to receive both honors; and

WHEREAS, following two enslaved children who escape their plantation and ultimately discover a community of formerly enslaved people and freeborn children, Amina Luqman-Dawson's *Freewater* is a novel of historical fiction for middle-grade students that tells an inspiring story of love, courage, and survival; and

WHEREAS, Amina Luqman-Dawson's *Freewater* is inspired by the history of Maroons, formerly enslaved individuals who escaped slavery and formed their own communities in previously uninhabited areas like the Great Dismal Swamp in the Commonwealth, shining light on this important and often overlooked chapter from the past; and

WHEREAS, after coming to the idea for *Freewater* during a Latin American studies class in college and writing a few chapters, Amina Luqman-Dawson set the project aside for more than a decade, at which point the urge to share the story and the history of the Maroons with her son led her to pick it up again; and

WHEREAS, prior to her success as an author, Amina Luqman-Dawson earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Vassar College and a master's degree in public policy from the University of California, Berkeley, then worked for some time as a policy professional, researcher, and consultant on issues of education and criminal justice; and

WHEREAS, *Freewater* is Amina Luqman-Dawson's first novel after authoring numerous newspaper op-eds, magazine articles, works of travel writing, book reviews, and the pictorial history book, *Images of America: African Americans of Petersburg*; and

WHEREAS, Amina Luqman-Dawson's extraordinary accomplishments in her early attempts at children's literature foretell a bright and promising career writing stories that will entertain and illuminate countless young minds; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Amina Luqman-Dawson for receiving both the John Newbery Medal and the Coretta Scott King Book Award in 2023; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Amina Luqman-Dawson as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for her achievements and best wishes for her continued success.

INTRODUCED

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