

# 2024 SPECIAL SESSION I

INTRODUCED

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## SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 618

Offered June 17, 2024

Celebrating the life of Melvin Eugene Walker.

Patron—Deeds

WHEREAS, Melvin Eugene Walker, a self-taught chef and restauranteur who built strong bonds of fellowship in downtown Charlottesville as the longtime owner of Mel's Cafe on Main Street, died on May 28, 2024; and

WHEREAS, Melvin Walker grew up in Charlottesville, where he graduated from Lane High School; he inherited a passion for cooking from his mother and grandmother and began working in kitchens when he was only 11 years old; and

WHEREAS, Melvin Walker established Mel's Cafe in a building that was already well-ingrained in local Black history as the former site of a Black-owned photography business and the former site of The Duck Inn, another Black family-owned restaurant; and

WHEREAS, over the decades, Mel's Cafe served classic, American soul food to local residents and visitors, earning statewide and national acclaim and treating customers of all races, creeds, and backgrounds, from people experiencing homelessness to famous athletes, with the same amount of care and respect; and

WHEREAS, Melvin Walker served every delicious meal with a positive attitude and a heartfelt smile, and he cultivated deep ties with the University of Virginia and other local institutions to enhance community life on Main Street and throughout the city; and

WHEREAS, over the years, Melvin Walker hosted annual Mother's Day events and community cookouts, and he donated countless meals to The Haven day shelter, senior citizen groups, summer camps, charitable organizations, and churches; and

WHEREAS, Melvin Walker was a beacon of hope in the community, hiring many individuals who faced challenges finding employment elsewhere and offering his wealth of experience and expertise to young entrepreneurs to ensure their success; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his exceptional achievements as a business owner, Melvin Walker received the Chuck Lewis III Passion Award in 2014; and

WHEREAS, Melvin Walker will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his mother, Marie; his children, Emoni Brock and Jeremiah Walker, and their families; and numerous other family members, friends, and former patrons; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of Virginia hereby note with great sadness the loss of Melvin Eugene Walker, owner of Mel's Cafe and a pillar of the Charlottesville community; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Melvin Eugene Walker as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's respect for his memory.

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