

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 381

Commending Sally Bell's Kitchen.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 19, 2025
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 20, 2025

WHEREAS, Sally Bell's Kitchen, a renowned institution in downtown Richmond, has served mouthwatering traditional southern dishes, often neatly packed into the restaurant's iconic cardboard lunch boxes, to generations of loyal customers for 100 years; and

WHEREAS, Sally Bell's Kitchen was established in 1924 by Sarah "Sallie" Cabell Jones and Elizabeth Lee Milton, who met at the Richmond Exchange for Woman's Work, a private organization where women could sell homemade goods; the duo developed a plan to make simple, delicious food from scratch and sell it wholesale to local grocers and restaurants, christening their business Sarah Lee's Kitchen, a combination of their names; and

WHEREAS, after about five years, Elizabeth Milton moved to New York, and Cabell Jones became the sole proprietor of Sarah Lee's Kitchen; she copyrighted the restaurant's name, created its recognizable logo of a woman holding a basket, and opened a takeout counter at its Grace Street location to sell directly to local residents; and

WHEREAS, in its early years, Sarah Lee's Kitchen sold sweet potato and mincemeat pies, biscuits, tarts, cakes, and cookies, but it quickly became best known for its lunch boxes—a sandwich, a side, a deviled egg, a pecan-topped cheese wafer, and an upside-down cupcake slathered in icing, all wrapped in checkerboard wax paper, tucked into a cardboard box, and tied up with string; and

WHEREAS, in 1959, when the national baked goods company Sara Lee expanded into the region, Sarah Lee's Kitchen rebranded as Sally Bell's Kitchen, posting an advertisement that read, "Same products, same location, same personnel" to reassure its loyal customers; and

WHEREAS, loyalty has been a hallmark of Sally Bell's Kitchen, with many employees spending upwards of 50 years at the business and some spending their entire career there, building strong relationships with community members that have endured across generations; and

WHEREAS, Richmond residents have brought their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to Sally Bell's Kitchen to share a taste of tradition, with meals made from recipes and techniques that date back to the restaurant's founding; and

WHEREAS, in the 1960s, Cabell Jones sold Sally Bell's Kitchen to her nephew and his wife, Hunter and Cene Jones, and in the 1980s, their son and daughter-in-law, Scott and Martha Jones, became the third generation of the Jones family to own and operate the business; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, Sally Bell's Kitchen moved from its longtime location on Grace Street to a new space across from the Science Museum of Virginia on West Broad Street, where it has maintained its commitment to excellence; and

WHEREAS, among many awards and accolades over the years, Sally Bell's Kitchen was the first-ever restaurant in the Commonwealth to earn the American Classic Award from the James Beard Foundation, exemplifying its lasting appeal, exceptional food, and beloved role in the community; and

WHEREAS, to commemorate its 100th anniversary, Sally Bell's Kitchen organized a celebration in October 2024 and brought back several classic baked goods from the restaurant's earlier days; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Sally Bell's Kitchen, a legendary eatery in Richmond, on the occasion of its 100th anniversary of service to the community; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Sally Bell's Kitchen as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the restaurant's storied history and legacy of success as a family-owned business.

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