

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 745

Celebrating the life of Virgil Alexander Wood, Ed.D.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 18, 2025

Agreed to by the Senate, February 20, 2025

WHEREAS, Virgil Alexander Wood, Ed.D., an esteemed church leader, educator, and civil rights activist who devoted his life to the economic, social, and spiritual development of others, died on December 28, 2024; and

WHEREAS, Virgil Wood earned a bachelor's degree in history from Virginia Union University in 1952, a master's degree in divinity from Andover Newton Theological School in 1956, and a doctorate in education from Harvard University in 1973; and

WHEREAS, Virgil Wood was ordained as a Baptist minister while still a teenager and would go on to lead congregations in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and the Commonwealth over a period of more than a half-century; and

WHEREAS, as pastor of Diamond Hill Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virgil Wood became actively involved in the civil rights movement, working with the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., while establishing the Lynchburg Improvement Association and a local unit of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); and

WHEREAS, Virgil Wood served as pastoral director of Blue Hill Christian Center in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston from 1963 to 1970, during which time he was the head of the Massachusetts unit of the SCLC; and

WHEREAS, Virgil Wood devoted 25 years to the congregation at Pond Street Baptist Church in Providence, Rhode Island, first serving as pastor from 1955 to 1958 and then from 1983 to 2005; and

WHEREAS, in addition to serving as a member of the national executive board of the SCLC for several years, Virgil Wood played a pivotal role in the historic March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963, by coordinating the participation of individuals and groups from the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, over a long and illustrious career in education, Virgil Wood served as dean and director of the African American Institute at Northeastern University, as a professor at what is today the Virginia University of Lynchburg, and as a visiting lecturer, researcher, and teaching fellow at Harvard University; and

WHEREAS, in his later years, Virgil Wood led Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's Beloved Community Initiative as a Ridenour Fellow with the School of Public and International Affairs in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies; and

WHEREAS, in his capacity as an administrator for Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America, Virgil Wood helped establish 13 job training centers for disadvantaged individuals across nine states; and

WHEREAS, Virgil Wood's commitment to community development led him to serve as a member of the economic development task force of the National Conference of Black Mayors and as the first chairman of the Progressive National Baptist Convention's economic development commission; he was also a panelist and member of three White House conferences over three different presidential administrations; and

WHEREAS, Virgil Wood authored several notable publications over his lifetime, including *Introduction to Black Church Economic Studies* and *In Love We Trust: Lessons I Learned from Martin Luther King*; and

WHEREAS, Virgil Wood will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by his loving wife of 71 years, Lillian; his children, David and Deborah, and their families; and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Virgil Alexander Wood, Ed.D., a distinguished church leader, educator, and civil rights activist whose faith, dedication, and service inspired all who knew him; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Virgil Alexander Wood, Ed.D., as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

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