

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 742

Commending Deborah D. Oswalt.

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

WHEREAS, after 32 years of successfully increasing access to primary health care for uninsured and medically underserved Virginians, Deborah D. Oswalt retired as the executive director of the Virginia Health Care Foundation; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly's Joint Commission on Health Care initiated the creation of the Virginia Health Care Foundation (VHCF) in 1992 as a public/private partnership with the mission of increasing access to primary health care for uninsured and medically underserved Virginians through innovative service delivery models; and

WHEREAS, as VHCF's founding executive director, Deborah Oswalt identified and implemented innovative and sustainable service delivery models to increase access to care for uninsured and medically underserved Virginians; during her tenure, she forged and nurtured strong partnerships with nine governors and their staff, as well as working relationships with legislators and staff, during 32 sessions of the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, under Deborah Oswalt's persistent, entrepreneurial, and laser-focused, data-driven leadership, VHCF grew from “a gleam in the eye” to a robust, nimble, and trusted public/private partnership that has helped more than 855,000 uninsured and medically underserved Virginians obtain the health care they need; and

WHEREAS, Deborah Oswalt and VHCF's founding chairman, Senator Mark Warner, instilled venture philanthropy as a core value at VHCF, carefully scrutinizing grant proposals as business plans and investing in projects designed for long-term sustainability; and

WHEREAS, since its inception, VHCF has funded 346 physicians, nurse practitioners, dentists, behavioral health professionals, and other health providers in Virginia's health care safety net, all of whom have provided 4 million patient visits for uninsured and medically underserved Virginians; and

WHEREAS, this disciplined approach resulted in an impressive 89 percent sustainability rate among the grants funded by VHCF for up to three years after graduating from the foundation's funding and facilitated growth in the number of health safety net sites operated by free and charitable clinics, hybrid clinics, community health centers, and other similar organizations—from 32 sites when VHCF was established to 231 sites; and

WHEREAS, under Deborah Oswalt's leadership, VHCF became the largest funder of Virginia's dental safety net, investing more than \$17 million in grants to help establish or expand 57 of the Commonwealth's dental safety net practices and investing \$12 million since 2010 to initiate and expand the delivery of basic behavioral health services to uninsured and medically underserved Virginians; and

WHEREAS, Deborah Oswalt instilled an entrepreneurial culture at VHCF to leverage its state appropriation by regularly creating new and innovative initiatives, such as the development of The Pharmacy Connection, a web-based software program that expedited access to free prescription medicines for chronic diseases from brand-name pharmaceutical companies' Patient Assistance Programs and several discount generic programs, which enabled more than 372,000 sick, uninsured, and medically underserved Virginians to obtain \$10 billion in free medicine; and

WHEREAS, Deborah Oswalt developed a multifaceted approach to increasing access to health care, including the creation of SignUpNow and Project Connect, which enrolled more than 150,000 eligible Virginians in state-sponsored health insurance programs; and

WHEREAS, Deborah Oswalt's constant quest for new opportunities led to the creation of innovative behavioral health care workforce programs, in partnership with public and private stakeholders, that increased the number of licensed behavioral health professionals in Virginia, including VHCF's Boost! and Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners Scholarship Programs, which resulted in a total of 127 new, licensed behavioral health professionals and growing at the end of 2024; and

WHEREAS, Deborah Oswalt established VHCF's Appleseed Initiative, which covered the cost of grant writers and reviewers for federal grant applications for community health centers, and generated \$56 million in new federal funds for Virginia to establish or expand 49 community health centers and leveraged \$104 for every \$1 invested by VHCF; and

WHEREAS, Deborah Oswalt kept a “finger on the pulse” of the ever-evolving health care landscape and dynamics to identify new opportunities and secure private funds, including \$17.9 million in challenge grants, to implement innovative initiatives that increased the capacity and sophistication of Virginia's health safety net, including the integrated delivery of basic mental health services with primary medical care, trauma-

informed care, telehealth, population health, and provider wellness programs to address burnout; and

WHEREAS, Deborah Oswalt's steadfast mantra, "what gets measured gets done," resulted in the creation of publicly available reports used by health care stakeholders throughout Virginia, including the annual *Profile of Virginia's Uninsured* and *Assessment of the Capacity of Virginia's Licensed Behavioral Health Workforce (2022)*, which have inspired new programs and initiatives to increase access to primary care and health care coverage; and

WHEREAS, Deborah Oswalt enabled VHCF to incubate and spin off several successful freestanding organizations, including RxPartnership, the Virginia Oral Health Coalition (now the Virginia Health Catalyst), and SeniorNavigator; and

WHEREAS, under Deborah Oswalt's leadership, VHCF provided a tremendous return on the Commonwealth's investment, leveraging an average of more than \$11 for every \$1 expended since its inception and garnered donations from the Commonwealth's finest corporations, organizations, and individuals, significantly increasing access to primary health care for uninsured and medically underserved Virginians; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That Deborah D. Oswalt hereby be commended on the occasion of her retirement as executive director of the Virginia Health Care Foundation; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Deborah D. Oswalt as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration for her legacy of achievements and tireless efforts to enhance the health and wellness of hundreds of thousands of Virginians.