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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 98

Offered February 10, 2026

*Celebrating the life of Bettie Minette Cooper.*

Patron—Williams Graves

WHEREAS, Bettie Minette Cooper, a passionate advocate for the arts and transformative civic leader whose service to the Hampton Roads region spanned more than 60 years, died on October 14, 2025; and

WHEREAS, Minette Cooper was born in New York City and began to cultivate her lifelong love of music, the arts, and community service from a young age; and

WHEREAS, Minette Cooper spent part of her youth in Mississippi before returning to New York to attend the Knox School, then continued her education at Smith College in Massachusetts and subsequently earned a degree in musicology from Barnard College in New York; and

WHEREAS, Minette Cooper married her husband, Charles, in 1958, and the couple ultimately settled in his hometown of Norfolk in 1962; she quickly became a well-known volunteer who focused on expanding access to arts education, strengthening nonprofit cultural institutions, preserving local heritage, and supporting the Jewish community; and

WHEREAS, Minette Cooper was a longtime volunteer, board member, and chorus member of the Virginia Symphony Orchestra and served as president of the organization from 1986 to 1988; and

WHEREAS, Minette Cooper was also a supporter of the Virginia Opera and other community-based music initiatives; she consistently advocated for high artistic standards paired with broad public access to the arts; and

WHEREAS, Minette Cooper was an active leader at Arts for Learning Virginia, formerly known as Young Audiences and helped to enhance arts access for students who may not have otherwise experienced arts programming; and

WHEREAS, Minette Cooper served three terms as board president of Arts for Learning Virginia and worked for several years without compensation during periods of financial hardship for the organization; and

WHEREAS, Minette Cooper was a board member of the Virginia Stage Company and was instrumental in the revitalization of the Wells Theatre in Norfolk, providing both strategic leadership and hands-on involvement; and

WHEREAS, Minette Cooper was a determined and effective advocate for arts education and nonprofit sustainability who built and maintained the modern arts ecosystem in Hampton Roads through her generosity, wise leadership, and commitment to excellence; she was a trusted mentor and friend who inspired generations of arts administrators, educators, and musicians; and

WHEREAS, in addition to her arts advocacy, Minette Cooper was a champion for the Jewish community in Norfolk and served as the first female president of Ohel Sholom Temple; she helped establish the temple's congregational choir and expressed her faith through song as a member of the choir until shortly before her passing; and

WHEREAS, predeceased by her husband of 66 years, Charles, Minette Cooper will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by her children, Brooke, Erik, and Jeff, and their families; and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Bettie Minette Cooper, a pillar of the Norfolk community who reshaped cultural life in the Hampton Roads region through her tireless support for the arts; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Bettie Minette Cooper as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for her memory.

INTRODUCED

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