

## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 171

*Celebrating the life of Cecelia Taliaferro Tucker.*

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 2, 2026

Agreed to by the Senate, March 5, 2026

WHEREAS, Cecelia Taliaferro Tucker, a distinguished educator, civil rights advocate, and civic leader whose life was marked by compassion, visionary leadership, and transformative service to the Commonwealth, died on July 29, 2025; and

WHEREAS, Cecelia Tucker, affectionately known to family and friends as “Ms. Cee Cee,” was born on April 17, 1939, in Martinsville and raised in South Hill during the era of Jim Crow, developing an enduring commitment to justice, opportunity, and inclusion that guided her life's work; and

WHEREAS, the daughter of devoted educators Emmett and Josephine Taliaferro, Cecelia Tucker excelled academically, graduating as valedictorian of East End High School before earning a bachelor's degree in biology, *cum laude*, from Virginia Union University and a master's degree in biology from Michigan State University; and

WHEREAS, while a student at Virginia Union University, Cecelia Tucker encountered the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and in 1963 she participated in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, witnessing firsthand the historic “I Have a Dream” speech and carrying its call for equality and human dignity throughout her life and service; and

WHEREAS, Cecelia Tucker began her distinguished career as a biology teacher at Booker T. Washington High School in Norfolk, where she was recognized as a Distinguished Teacher and inspired generations of students through her commitment to excellence in the classroom and steadfast belief in her students' potential; and

WHEREAS, in 1965, Cecelia Tucker married Billy Jack “BJ” Tucker, and together they built a loving family and shared a deep commitment to education, faith, and community; and

WHEREAS, in 1991, Cecelia Tucker joined Old Dominion University as assistant to the president for community relations, a position she held with distinction for more than three decades, serving four university presidents and transforming relationships between the institution and the Hampton Roads community through trust, collaboration, and inclusive engagement; and

WHEREAS, Cecelia Tucker helped reshape Old Dominion University into an institution that welcomed and served all people, strengthening ties with surrounding neighborhoods, including Lambert's Point, and establishing meaningful initiatives such as the Lambert's Point Summer Youth Program to provide education, recreation, and employment opportunities for young people; and

WHEREAS, upon Cecelia Tucker's retirement in 2022, Old Dominion University honored her extraordinary contributions by naming her assistant to the president emerita, establishing a scholarship in her name, and presenting her with the Presidential Medallion for Distinguished Service; and

WHEREAS, continuing her lifelong commitment to equity and belonging, Cecelia Tucker later served Virginia Wesleyan University as special advisor to the president on diversity, advancing institutional efforts to foster inclusive communities; and

WHEREAS, a tireless civic leader, Cecelia Tucker devoted herself to the well-being of others through service to numerous organizations, including the William A. Hunton YMCA, the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, Town-N-Gown, and many other community initiatives; she was also a founding member of the Urban League of Hampton Roads; and

WHEREAS, a woman of deep faith, Cecelia Tucker was a devoted member and trustee of Bank Street Memorial Baptist Church and a lifelong member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, and The Links, Incorporated, embodying the highest ideals of service, scholarship, and sisterhood; and

WHEREAS, Cecelia Tucker's exceptional contributions to education, civil rights, and community development were recognized through numerous honors, including the NAACP Lifetime Investment in Freedom Award, the Girl Scouts Famous Former Award, the Urban League Legacy Award, and many others; and

WHEREAS, widely known as a mentor, connector, advisor, and bridge builder, Cecelia Tucker dedicated her life to strengthening institutions, expanding opportunity, and bringing people together across communities; and

WHEREAS, above all, Cecelia Tucker was a devoted mother, grandmother, mentor, and friend, remembered for her grace, wisdom, generosity of spirit, and unwavering commitment to service, inclusion, and the flourishing of her community; 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 Cecelia Taliaferro Tucker, a beloved educator, civil rights advocate, and community leader whose life of service strengthened institutions, uplifted generations, and helped shape the character of Hampton Roads and the Commonwealth; 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 Cecelia Taliaferro Tucker as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for her memory.