

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 190

*Commending the Williamsburg Bray School.*

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 9, 2026

WHEREAS, 2024 marked the 250th anniversary of the closing of the Williamsburg Bray School, the oldest extant building in the United States dedicated to the education of Black children, which was recently restored to its home in the Historic Area of Colonial Williamsburg; and

WHEREAS, at the recommendation of Benjamin Franklin, the Bray School was founded in 1760 as a school for teaching free and enslaved Black children to read by the Associates of Dr. Bray, an England-based charity; and

WHEREAS, between when the Bray School was founded and when it was relocated in 1764 or 1765, more than 300 students were educated by the school's sole teacher, Ann Wager, acquiring literacy skills that empowered them and gave them hope for greater agency and opportunity in their lives; and

WHEREAS, later known as the Bray-Digges House, in the 1930s, the Bray School building was moved to the campus of The College of William & Mary (W&M), and the knowledge of its origins was lost to time; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, architectural preservationists with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation used dendrochronology to date the Bray-Digges House's lumber and confirm that it was formerly the building that housed the Bray School; and

WHEREAS, shortly thereafter, the Williamsburg Bray School Initiative was established to research, restore, and preserve the Bray School building and move it to the grounds of Colonial Williamsburg near where it was originally located; and

WHEREAS, today, the Bray School building stands as the 89th original structure to be identified and restored in the Historic Area of Colonial Williamsburg and as a powerful symbol of the strength and resilience of the Black community in Williamsburg during the Colonial Period; and

WHEREAS, the Williamsburg Bray School Initiative and W&M established the Bray School Lab as a unit of W&M Libraries to continue to uncover, document, preserve, and share the history and legacies of the Bray School and its students; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the efforts of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the Williamsburg Bray School Initiative, and W&M, visitors to Colonial Williamsburg now have the opportunity to appreciate and learn more about the history of the Bray School and its place in our nation's story; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the Williamsburg Bray School hereby be commended in honor of its legacy; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to representatives of the Williamsburg Bray School Initiative as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration for the Williamsburg Bray School's significance to the cultural and architectural history of the Commonwealth and the nation.

ENROLLED

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