

SENATE RESOLUTION

8647

By Senators Saldaña and Llias

1       WHEREAS, Mrs. Phyllis Little-Epamynondas has demonstrated a  
2 sustained commitment over more than 30 years of service toward the  
3 realization of health care as a human right for all, including the  
4 Black, Latino, and LGBTQAI communities; and

5       WHEREAS, Mrs. Phyllis started at POCAAN (People of Color Against  
6 AIDS Network) as a program manager in 1990 and assumed the role of  
7 executive director in 1998 and worked closely with the Washington  
8 State Department of Health and the Washington State Department of  
9 Corrections to start one of the first HIV medical case management  
10 programs focused on the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of  
11 Color) community, which worked to reduce the effects of HIV in  
12 communities of color, until her retirement in 2015; and

13       WHEREAS, Mrs. Phyllis' tenure as executive director at POCAAN was  
14 energetically focused on building community responses to the HIV  
15 epidemic, and her love for training others increased and expanded the  
16 BIPOC provider's response to HIV, ensuring access to a full range of  
17 opportunities that have significantly impacted the fight for an HIV  
18 free Washington State; and

19       WHEREAS, Under Mrs. Phyllis' leadership POCAAN's community  
20 outreach and engagement expanded programs like Brother-to-Brother,  
21 Sistah-to-Sistah, and Entre Hermanos, all of which have become  
22 501(c) (3) organizations working to improve all the lives of  
23 Washington State citizens; and

1       WHEREAS, Mrs. Phyllis cared deeply for the Transgender Community  
2 in a time when the community had few allies; she hired a Black Trans  
3 Woman, Mrs. Vanessa Grandberry, and helped to form T-Time, a Black  
4 Trans program that distributed one of the nation's first newsletters  
5 focused on the Black Trans Community; and

6       WHEREAS, Mrs. Phyllis created and sustained programs during her  
7 tenure that supported BIPOC communities across the state, which led  
8 to the opening of three new offices in Spokane, Olympia, and  
9 Bremerton; and

10       WHEREAS, Mrs. Phyllis helped expand POCAAN's reach in Tacoma and  
11 Yakima, and grew the staff serving these communities to more than 50,  
12 many of whom still work in the community toward the eradication of  
13 HIV today; and

14       WHEREAS, Mrs. Phyllis redefined what care services look like in  
15 Washington State as an advocate for whole-person care, and expanded  
16 POCAAN's HIV services with the understanding that related issues such  
17 as substance abuse, incarceration, homelessness, sexually transmitted  
18 diseases, racism, sexism, and homophobia also contribute to community  
19 marginalization and health disparities;

20       NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Washington State Senate  
21 does hereby honor the lifelong commitment of this leader, advocate,  
22 trailblazer, and ambassador in the work of HIV Outreach and Education  
23 to BIPOC Communities across our state and to further recognize that  
24 her passing on November 24, 2021, leaves a deep void in the work to  
25 end HIV and other health inequities in Washington State; and

26       BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Senate express profound  
27 appreciation and enduring gratitude to Mrs. Phyllis, honor her rich  
28 legacy for health equity in communities of color, and recognize her  
29 influence on improving the lives of those affected by HIV here in  
30 Washington; and

31       BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be  
32 immediately transmitted by the Secretary of the Senate to the  
33 surviving family members of Mrs. Phyllis and to Steven Sawyer,  
34 executive director of POCAAN.

--- END ---