SENATE RESOLUTION

8647

By Senators Saldaña and Liias

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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