

2017-J998

Senate Resolution No. 998

BY: Senator PARKER

MOURNING the death of Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross, pioneering psychiatrist, distinguished citizen and devoted member of her community

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to citizens of the State of New York whose lifework and civic endeavor served to enhance the quality of life in their communities and the great State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross, a pioneering black pediatrician, psychiatrist, prison monitor and mental health administrator, died on January 16, 2017, at the age of 80; and

WHEREAS, A lifelong mental health activist for the underserved and most vulnerable, Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross was an outstanding professional and personal role model for women and African American leaders in medicine and beyond; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Harrison-Ross was a ubiquitous presence in the mental health field in New York and nationally for more than 35 years; she was an early leader in designing rehabilitation and therapy for children with a combination of severe developmental, emotional and physical disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Phyllis Anne Harrison was born on August 14, 1936, in Detroit to Harold Jerome Harrison and the former Edna Smith; and

WHEREAS, Phyllis Harrison-Ross began her quest for excellence at just 15 years old at Albion College in Michigan, where she earned her Bachelor of Science degree in 1956; three years later, at the age of 21, she received her medical degree from Wayne State University of Medicine, the only black woman in her graduating class; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, she went on to complete her fellowship at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross trained as a pediatrician and as a psychiatrist, interning at Bronx Municipal Hospital and Albert Einstein College of Medicine; there she helped develop therapeutic programs for preschool children with disabilities at what is now known as the Rose F. Kennedy University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities; and

WHEREAS, This esteemed woman was also at the forefront of promoting teleconferencing to bridge gaps between doctors and patients, and what is known as televisiting, to link inmates in prisons in rural parts of upstate New York to their families in New York City and other urban areas; and

WHEREAS, From 1973 to 1999, Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross directed the Community Mental Health Center at Metropolitan Hospital in East Harlem and was the hospital's chief of psychiatry; and

WHEREAS, Throughout her illustrious career, Phyllis Harrison-Ross was instrumental in the formation of the New York City Federation of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Alcoholism Services in 1975; she

was president of the Black Psychiatrists of America from 1976 to 1978, and served as chairwoman of the New York City Directors of Psychiatry in Municipal Hospitals in the late 1980s; in 2000, she founded the Black Psychiatrists of Greater New York & Associates; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross served on President Richard M. Nixon's National Advisory Council for Drug Abuse Prevention and the New York State Commission of Correction and was chairwoman of the commission's Medical Review Board; and

WHEREAS, A true humanitarian, after the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross gathered her colleagues to provide interfaith disaster services and became the volunteer president of All Healers Mental Health Alliance, which seeks to organize long-term responses to mental health needs that arise from natural and man-made disasters; and

WHEREAS, In 2004, Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross received the American Psychiatric Association's Solomon Carter Fuller Award for African-American Pioneers; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross was also an emeritus professor of psychiatry and behavioral health services at the New York Medical College; she wrote numerous articles and two books, *Getting It Together*, a textbook for junior and senior high school students, and, with Barbara Wyden, *The Black Child: A Parents' Guide*; and

WHEREAS, In July of 2016, Phyllis Harrison-Ross was featured in an article in *The New York Times* on issues facing older individuals when they move to smaller living quarters; she had lived in the same large apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan for 48 years; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross is predeceased by her beloved husband, Edgar Lee Ross; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all she served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross, pioneering psychiatrist, distinguished citizen and devoted member of her community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross.