

2017-J5690

Senate Resolution No. 5690

BY: Senator VALESKY

COMMEMORATING the 100th Anniversary of the Dunbar Association, Inc. to be celebrated on June 27, 2018

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to commend those illustrious organizations of the State of New York whose focus and intent have made a substantial impact on the quality of life in their communities; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Dunbar Association, Inc. to be celebrated on Wednesday, June 27, 2018; and

WHEREAS, The Dunbar Association, located in Syracuse, New York, is an African-American settlement house; and

WHEREAS, The advent of the 20th century brought notable changes to the black community of Syracuse; the population grew slowly as the opportunities for employment expanded; and

WHEREAS, During this time, black men and women were coming from the south to work in the munitions industry and other factories; however, as employment opportunities broadened in the city, discrimination grew more overt; and

WHEREAS, It was in this setting, in 1918, that Jimmy LaGrin conceived the idea of providing recreational activities to the black youth of the community with the hope this would give the younger generation a means of staying occupied without engaging in crime; and

WHEREAS, Jimmy LaGrin began his program under the auspices of the AME Zion Church and also became acquainted with black students attending Syracuse University who were united in a literary group, the Paul Lawrence Dunbar Society, named for the African-American poet; and

WHEREAS, Using the settlement house model, Jimmy LaGrin sought the financial aid of the white community by enlisting the help of three wealthy women: Ms. Lucia Knowles, Mrs. Frederick Hazard and her sister, Mrs. Walter Burlingame; and

WHEREAS, These three women were all members of the city's Commonwealth Club, an influential business group interested in service projects; they too were engrossed in the works of Paul Lawrence Dunbar; and

WHEREAS, With the backing of the Commonwealth Club, Jimmy LaGrin was able to open his black community center and due to their help, called it Dunbar House; and

WHEREAS, Incorporated in 1932, the Dunbar House became the Dunbar Association, Inc. or as it is more commonly known today, the Dunbar Center; and

WHEREAS, The Dunbar Association became the core of the 1930s black community and over the course of 100 years it has served in many different manners; first, the agency has served as one of Central New York's access gateways for migrating African Americans; and

WHEREAS, The agency has also filled the gaps created by the color division in the city and has helped to maintain African-American culture by acting as a location for the black community's social events such as dances, youth groups, meetings and weddings; and

WHEREAS, During World War II, the Dunbar Association was used as a training center and in the 1950s, during a violent outbreak of polio, the center was vital in helping to eradicate the poor health of the city; and

WHEREAS, Throughout its distinguished history, the Dunbar Association has continuously provided visibility for the black community and has acted as the voice for social change; and

WHEREAS, The Dunbar Association has adapted its focus over time to include three distinct divisions: Community Services, Family Services and Youth Services; the programs offered help to strengthen families by addressing service needs and gaps; and

WHEREAS, Today, the Dunbar Association's focus has narrowed slightly to include a computer lab, after-school homework help, summer camps, teen activities, and senior programs; the center also continues to serve its historical functions as a meeting place for community events; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that when organizations of such noble aims and accomplishments are brought to our attention, they should be celebrated and recognized by all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Dunbar Association, Inc. to be celebrated on June 27, 2018; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Dunbar Association, Inc.