

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION honoring Dr. James and Margaret Cunningham upon the occasion of their designation for special recognition by the African American Cultural Center of the Capital Region, Inc. on April 18, 2013

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to those individuals of historic and artistic significance whose creative talents have contributed to the cultural enrichment of our communities and our Nation; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to honor Dr. James and Margaret Cunningham upon the occasion of their designation for special recognition by the African American Cultural Center of the Capital Region, Inc., at its Gala Event on Thursday, April 18, 2013, in the Swyer Theater at the Egg, Albany, New York; and

WHEREAS, Dr. James and Margaret Cunningham are being recognized for their lifelong dedication to promoting the contributions of African Americans to American arts and culture as founders of the Hamilton Hill Arts Center in Schenectady, New York; and

WHEREAS, Dr. James and Margaret Cunningham have worked together since their marriage in 1943 to make the world a better place; they have channeled their prodigious talents towards making a difference in the world of arts and culture, the education system, the civil rights arena and the mental health field; and

WHEREAS, Margaret Cunningham is a teacher, painter and potter whose interest in the arts led her to found two organizations that thrive to this day: the Hamilton Hill Arts Center and Black Dimensions in Art; and

WHEREAS, When it was first established, the Hamilton Hill Arts Center provided primarily African American inner-city children in Schenectady, New York, exposure to arts and culture and opportunities to build self esteem; today, it has expanded to offer arts and cultural experiences to the entire Capital Region; and

WHEREAS, Black Dimensions in Art, which also operates in Schenectady, focuses on bringing renowned African American artists to the Capital Region, while encouraging young artists to find an audience in the region; and

WHEREAS, At the age of 93, Margaret Cunningham co-authored and self-published INTEGRATING DELMAR, which describes her family's efforts to find decent housing at a time when blacks were relegated to the ghetto; and

WHEREAS, A patron of the arts, Dr. James Cunningham is a retired physician and psychiatrist who was the first Black psychiatrist in the Capital District; for many years he focused on issues of community mental health, and was a much sought after expert witness in trials relating to mental health; and

WHEREAS, Dr. James Cunningham worked as a volunteer with the Albany NAACP on housing issues, drawing attention to the impact of state and local policies on the African American community in the Capital Region; and

WHEREAS, Dr. James and Margaret Cunningham have a long and storied history of compassionate and deep civic engagement, from raising funds to support the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee during the civil rights movement, to serving on the boards of directors of numerous nonprofit groups; both remain vitally interested in their community; and

WHEREAS, Dr. James and Margaret Cunningham are known as a family centered couple, whose definition of family included not only extended family but also many other youngsters in need of loving attention and support; and

WHEREAS, It is most fitting that we take time to celebrate artists and

those who support the arts within the great State of New York, and to cherish and give thanks for our American freedom, the only atmosphere in which artists can truly create and in which art is truly the expression of the soul; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor Dr. James and Margaret Cunningham upon the occasion of their designation for special recognition by the African American Cultural Center of the Capital Region, Inc., on April 18, 2013; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Dr. James and Margaret Cunningham.