

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION celebrating the life and accomplishments of Helen Sperling, renowned lecturer and Holocaust survivor

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is moved to recognize and pay tribute to the life and accomplishments of Helen Sperling for the courage and fortitude she displayed throughout her life; and

WHEREAS, With her tremendous pride for her heritage, and her ceaseless work against hate and prejudice, Helen Sperling benefited the world in immeasurable ways; and

WHEREAS, A survivor of Nazi death and prison camps, Helen Sperling died on Thursday, December 3, 2015, at the remarkable age of 95, in Utica, New York; and

WHEREAS, As a Jewish girl growing up in Poland, Helen Sperling's home was invaded by the Nazis and she lost her entire family except her younger brother, and was forced to live in a ghetto and work in death camps for years; and

WHEREAS, After being liberated from the Buchenwald death camp in April of 1945, Helen Sperling spent three years in a hospital; while she was recovering, her brother, who had been separated from her many years ago, finally found her and the siblings were reunited; and

WHEREAS, Helen, then 26 years old, and her brother, along with a fellow survivor, Leon Sperling, immigrated to the United States; Helen and Leon married and moved to Utica, New York, where they adopted two children; and

WHEREAS, Helen Sperling began speaking about her experiences more than 50 years ago, partly to raise awareness after her daughter was slandered at school for being Jewish, and partly to remind people that despite the lessons of the Holocaust, genocide has not stopped; and

WHEREAS, In 1988, Helen Sperling was invited to speak at a new religion class "Faith After the Holocaust" at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York; her story captivated and moved many students and educators to tears, and subsequently, each year, became part of the curriculum; and

WHEREAS, For many years, Helen Sperling was a guest speaker at Boys State hosted by the American Legion; and

WHEREAS, Helen Sperling summarized her experiences with a profound and enduring phrase, "thou shall not be a bystander"; she devoted her life to living out this mission; at each appearance, she distributed wristbands to the audience bearing that phrase; and

WHEREAS, Through her lecture series and appearances at colleges, public schools and churches, and before many civic groups, Helen Sperling made it her mission to ensure that the six million Jews killed in the Holocaust will never be forgotten; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is proud to inscribe upon its records this memoriam for Helen Sperling, whose legacy as the conscience of the Holocaust will long endure the passage of time; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to celebrate the life and accomplishments of Helen Sperling, renowned lecturer and Holocaust survivor; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Helen Sperling.