

BY: Senator MONTGOMERY

CONGRATULATING the men who successfully completed
the Ready, Willing & Able Program on March 23, 2017

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize that the quality and character of life in the communities across New York State are reflective of the concerned and dedicated efforts of those organizations and individuals who would devote themselves to the welfare of the community and its citizenry; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to congratulate the men who successfully completed the Ready, Willing & Able Program, celebrated at a Ceremony on Thursday, March 23, 2017, in Wallace Hall at the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola in New York, New York; and

WHEREAS, For more than 25 years, The Doe Fund's Ready, Willing & Able program has restored hope, family, and opportunity for thousands of formerly homeless and incarcerated men; and

WHEREAS, Through a combination of paid work, social services, education, and career training, the men forge a path to self-sufficiency, for themselves and for their children; the tools they gain and the opportunities they earn permanently break the cycles of drug use, incarceration, and poverty for them and their families, for life; and

WHEREAS, In the early- to mid-1980s, homelessness in New York City had reached a crisis point; people sleeping on the street were often mistaken for garbage, and crushed to death by traffic and in the backs of sanitation trucks; they were denied fundamental rights and dignity while the city as a whole was overrun with trash, crime, and drugs; and

WHEREAS, George T. McDonald, then a garment industry executive, was determined to help in some way; he spent 700 nights in Grand Central Terminal, handing out sandwiches and clothing to the hundreds of homeless who slept there; and

WHEREAS, In 1985, The Doe Fund was founded in memory of a homeless woman known only as "Mama" Doe; since its inception, this vital organization has transformed the lives of tens of thousands of people with histories of homelessness, incarceration, poverty, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS; and

WHEREAS, More than 30 years after Mama's death, The Doe Fund has grown into a \$61 million nonprofit organization which serves thousands each day through its programs; Mama's memory is honored each Christmas Day with a candlelight vigil in Grand Central Terminal; and

WHEREAS, In 1990, the McDonalds launched Ready, Willing & Able, a

ground-breaking transitional work program and the nation's first large-scale social enterprise; designed to provide economic opportunity to homeless men, the program quickly proved equally effective in transitioning formerly incarcerated men into mainstream society; this innovative program has since helped more than 22,000 men transform their lives; and

WHEREAS, At the heart of Ready, Willing & Able is paid transitional work, the opportunity to go to work and earn money from a participant's first day in the program, complemented by transitional housing, education, career development and training, and personalized case management and social services; and

WHEREAS, After 9-12 months, participants graduate from the program with the work and life skills necessary to achieve permanent self-sufficiency and become economic engines for their families and in their communities; and

WHEREAS, An independent study by Harvard University's Dr. Bruce Western found that Ready, Willing & Able graduates are 60% less likely to be convicted of a felony three years after exiting the program; overall, the program cuts the risk of future police contact by a third; the program also lifts the enormous financial burdens of incarceration, recidivism, and homelessness; and

WHEREAS, It is the practice of this Legislative Body to commend individuals of outstanding character, who have shown initiative and commitment toward constantly pursuing higher goals for themselves, and acting as role models of leadership to be emulated by their peers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to congratulate the men who successfully completed the Ready, Willing & Able Program, and to wish them continued success in all their future endeavors; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Ready, Willing & Able Program of the Doe Fund.