

BY: Senator GRIFFO

COMMENDING the Masonic Medical Research Institute
upon the occasion of celebrating its 60th
Anniversary on June 21, 2018

WHEREAS, It is incumbent upon the people of the State of New York to commend and recognize those esteemed individuals and institutions within the medical community for their extraordinary and sustained contributions to the progress of medicine and the improvement of life; and

WHEREAS, Medical research is vital to the current health care needs of all citizens and contributes to the advancement of future medical breakthroughs; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commend the Masonic Medical Research Institute upon the occasion of its 60th Anniversary to be celebrated at an event on Thursday, June 21, 2018; and

WHEREAS, Since its inception, the scientific breakthroughs at the Masonic Medical Research Laboratory (MMRL), renamed the Masonic Medical Research Institute in 2018, have helped generate new heart medications, developed diagnostic procedures for the management of cardiac arrhythmias and advanced lifesaving technologies; these monumental achievements have contributed immeasurably to a reduction in mortality from heart disease; and

WHEREAS, In the late 1940s medical experts recognized that rheumatic diseases were highly prevalent in the United States, followed by cardiovascular disease and kidney disease; subsequently, it was determined that a large percentage of heart disease cases originated from recurring attacks of rheumatic fever in childhood; and

WHEREAS, Due to the need to establish a long-range program of basic medical research, Grand Masters Gay H. Brown and Raymond C. Ellis led the effort to establish the Masonic Foundation for Medical Research and Human Welfare, which was incorporated on October 23, 1947, for the purposes of studying this correlation; and

WHEREAS, In 1955, Foundation members coordinated with the Directors of the Masonic Hall and Asylum Fund to secure land for the construction of a new laboratory; they found a two acre parcel on the grounds of the Masonic Care Community in Utica, New York, just 500 yards west of the Tompkins Memorial Chapel; the building was completed in June of 1958, and the facility was turned over to the Foundation at a ceremony on June 21, 1958, attended by, among others, Grand Master Lloyd Jones and Governor Averell Harriman; and

WHEREAS, John Murray Steele, M.D., Professor of Medicine at New York

University College of Medicine and Director of New York University Research Service at Goldwater Memorial Hospital was chosen as the laboratory's first Director of Research; and

WHEREAS, In 1960, Gordon K. Moe, M.D., Ph.D., Chairman of Physiology at Upstate Medical Center of the State University of New York at Syracuse, succeeded Dr. Steele as Director of Research; throughout his long and illustrious tenure, Dr. Moe helped the laboratory establish a prestigious reputation worldwide; through his research, the diagnosis and treatment of cardiac disease had advanced significantly and cardiac electrophysiology research was born at the laboratory; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the 1960s and thereafter, the MMRI became a well-established world-famous premier research institution, with training of several Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Fellows; on January 16, 1976, the name of the Laboratory was changed from the Masonic Foundation for Medical Research and Human Welfare to the Masonic Medical Research Laboratory; and

WHEREAS, During the 1970s and early 1980s, in addition to cardiac electrophysiology, cancer and muscular dystrophy programs were established; the experimental cardiology group began making significant discoveries, making it an attractive destination for young scientists seeking cardiac electrophysiology training, as well as those interested in research; Dr. Moe worked with notable researchers, such as Norman Olsen, Ph.D., Verner J. Wulff, Ph.D., Jaok Han, M.D., Ph.D., Carlos Mendez, M.D., Greg Ferrier, Ph.D., and many others, all of whom helped establish a prestigious reputation for the laboratory worldwide, in the diagnosis and treatment of cardiac diseases; Dr. Moe retired in 1984; and

WHEREAS, Many additions were made to the facility in the mid to late-1980s including the Max L. Kamiel Library, the Guy R. Vandermosten Computer Facility, and the Raymond C. Ellis Tree of Humanity, which is located in the front lobby; in 1988, the second story addition of the Royal Arch Masons Wing was completed; and

WHEREAS, In the 1990s, the first gene responsible for sudden cardiac death was discovered; the Laboratory made additional advancements in treatments for cardiac diseases such as abnormal heart rhythms, QT syndrome, and Brugada syndrome; the laboratory also expanded outside of cardiology research, creating new programs such as the immunology program and the molecular biology program; and

WHEREAS, In 2002, the MMRI announced the establishment of the Molecular Genetics program, and assembled a team of top researchers to investigate the cause of sudden death caused by abnormal heart rhythm; MMRI's storied history of research contributed to the development of the pacemaker, implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD), automatic external defibrillator (AED), catheter ablation therapy and a wide variety of drugs used to treat heart disease; and

WHEREAS, From 1998-2008, death from heart disease decreased by 25% in the United States, largely due to MMRI's significant research impact;

during this period the laboratory began research on human heart tissue in collaboration with the Mohawk Valley Heart Institute; and the laboratory discovered direct evidence linking sudden infant death syndrome to an abnormal heart rhythm; and

WHEREAS, In June of 2017, the Laboratory announced a multi-million dollar renovation of its second and third floors, resulting in the modernization of 6,800 square feet of new laboratory space that will offer over 40 new research jobs; in light of the significant modernization and expansion for the facility, the Board of Directors renamed the laboratory the Masonic Medical Research Institute (MMRI), to encompass the expanding program and vision for the future of the research there; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Directors proudly announced the appointment of the first woman in the laboratory's history as Director of Research, Dr. Maria Kontaridis, Ph.D., who came from Harvard Medical School and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston where she also served as Director of the Basic Cardiovascular Research Program; and

WHEREAS, For its tremendous impact on the community, the Utica Chamber of Commerce again named the MMRI as the 2017 Business of the Year in the Not-for-Profit with under 50 Employees Category; the laboratory was previously honored with this distinction in 2007; and

WHEREAS, After 60 years, the MMRI continues to serve as a frontrunner in cutting edge basic and translational research; its scientific discoveries continue to inspire hundreds of talented students to pursue careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics by hosting the annual "Summer Fellowship Program" in which the next generation of scientists is offered the opportunity to work side-by-side with highly accomplished research staff; and

WHEREAS, The State of New York has long been a leader in medical research and treatment, and numerous individuals and institutions in New York State have assumed worldwide leadership roles in both research and treatment of life-threatening illnesses; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body paused in its deliberations to commend the Masonic Medical Research Institute upon the occasion of celebrating its 60th Anniversary on June 21, 2018; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Dr. Maria Kontaridis, Director of Research; David F. Schneeweiss, Chairman of the MMRI Board of Directors; Alvaro F. Quiroga - Sanchez, President of the MMRI Board of Directors; and to each member of the Masonic Medical Research Institute Board of Directors.