

BY: M. of A. Sillitti

CELEBRATING the life and accomplishments of Dr. Henry Viscardi Jr., and commending him posthumously for his outstanding advocacy on behalf of individuals with disabilities

WHEREAS, Individuals and organizations devoted to improving the quality of life for others, enabling them to build lives of dignity and self-worth are deserving of the highest praise and recognition; and

WHEREAS, From time to time, society calls upon these individuals and organizations to be recognized for the significance of their contributions and efforts to assist others in developing the skills necessary to be successful, productive citizens; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to celebrate the life and accomplishments of Dr. Henry Viscardi Jr., and to commend him posthumously for his outstanding advocacy on behalf of individuals with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The unity of our State and Nation is built upon the compassion of individuals such as Dr. Henry Viscardi Jr. who uphold the values of community life and who, through their great actions, epitomize the best of humanity; and

WHEREAS, Born on May 10, 1912, Dr. Henry Viscardi, Jr., who himself wore prosthetic legs, served as disability advisor to eight United States Presidents, from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Jimmy Carter, and became one of the world's leading advocates for people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The original incarnation of The Viscardi Center, established in 1952 by Dr. Henry Viscardi Jr. and operated out of a garage in West Hempstead, New York, demonstrated that disabled veterans from World War II and the Korean War had the skills and abilities to be successful, productive employees; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, the Center provided assembly and factory work for several industry giants such as Grumman, General Electric, IBM and the Department of Defense, and was the first U.S. business to be staffed primarily by people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, In the early 1960s, services were expanded to include vocational training and job placement for all people with disabilities when the workshop was moved to a larger facility in Albertson, where The Viscardi Center continues to operate today; and

WHEREAS, The extra space also allowed Dr. Henry Viscardi Jr. to pursue another dream, and in 1962, he opened a school, now named in his honor, which remains a world-renowned model for delivering a high quality, traditional education to students with severe physical

disabilities; and

WHEREAS, His tireless efforts went on to inspire legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1975 and the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, which protects the rights of children and adults with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Under the able leadership of Dr. Henry Viscardi Jr., the Center continued to expand and grow; in 1996, the Nathaniel H. Kornreich Technology Center, which showcases state-of-the-art assistive technology while providing information demonstrations, technology evaluations, and training on assistive technology and its impact on people with disabilities, was founded; and

WHEREAS, Additionally, one year later, the Center's National Business and Disability Council took a leading role nationally as a resource for the successful integration of persons with disabilities into the workforce and consumer marketplace; and

WHEREAS, To this day, The Henry Viscardi School and The Viscardi Center continue Dr. Viscardi's mission to educate, employ and empower people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, This year marks the 110th birthday of Henry Viscardi, the 70th Anniversary of The Viscardi Center, and the 60th Anniversary of the Henry Viscardi School; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Henry Viscardi Jr. lived an immensely beautiful life built on compassion, kindness, and respect for others; he will be remembered as one of the most significant and enduring leaders in integrating disabled people into America's workforce, and his insight and strength will forever serve as a beacon of love and hope to the countless lives he touched; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that when individuals and 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 celebrate the life and accomplishments of Dr. Henry Viscardi Jr., and to commend him posthumously for his outstanding advocacy on behalf of individuals with disabilities; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Dr. Henry Viscardi Jr.