

BY: Senator STEWART-COUSINS

MOURNING the death of Dr. Hazel N. Dukes,
distinguished citizen and devoted member of her
community

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to citizens of the State of New York whose lifework and civic endeavors served to enhance the quality of life in their communities and this great Empire State; and

WHEREAS, The members of this Legislative Body are deeply saddened by the passing of Dr. Hazel Nell Dukes on March 1, 2025, at the age of 92, and wish to express their heartfelt condolences to her family, friends, colleagues, and the countless individuals whose lives she touched; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hazel Dukes was a trailblazing civil rights leader, a tireless advocate for racial and social justice, and a champion for equality, dedicating her life to uplifting marginalized communities and fighting for the rights of all people; and

WHEREAS, Born in Montgomery, Alabama, on March 17, 1932, to parents Alice and Edward Dukes, Hazel Dukes demonstrated an early passion for education and community service, attending Alabama State Teachers College before pursuing studies in Business Administration at Nassau Community College and later earning a bachelor's degree from Adelphi University in 1978; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hazel Dukes made history in 1966 as the first African American to work at the Nassau County Attorney's Office, where she worked to promote equal access to justice and public resources; and

WHEREAS, She was instrumental in the implementation of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "Head Start" program, which provided crucial early childhood education to underserved communities and helped countless children and families achieve better futures; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hazel Dukes held numerous leadership roles throughout her lifetime, including serving as the national president of the NAACP from 1989 to 1992, during which time she guided the organization through critical years of advocacy and reform, and later serving for more than four decades as president of the NAACP New York State Conference; and

WHEREAS, She was a fearless advocate for voting rights, fair housing, economic opportunity, and education, and in 1972, she played a historic role by seconding the presidential nomination of Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman to seek a major party's nomination for President of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Her advocacy continued into the 21st century, influencing President Joe Biden's decision to select a Black woman as his running mate in 2020, and in 2023, she was awarded the NAACP's highest honor,

the Spingarn Medal, presented by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in recognition of her extraordinary contributions; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hazel Dukes also led efforts in public administration, serving as president of the New York City Off-Track Betting Corporation and later founding Hazel N. Dukes & Associates, a consulting firm specializing in public policy, health, and diversity; and

WHEREAS, She remained a steadfast leader in the NAACP National Board of Directors and countless other civic organizations, ensuring that future generations continued the fight for justice and equality; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hazel Dukes' commitment to education was further exemplified by her service as a trustee of the State University of New York and Stillman College, where she worked to expand educational opportunities for underrepresented communities; and

WHEREAS, She was a devoted member of the Assembly of Prayer Baptist Church, where she served as Executive Assistant to the Pastor, was a member of the Board of Trustees, and taught Adult Sunday School, demonstrating her deep faith and commitment to community service; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hazel Dukes received numerous accolades for her unwavering dedication, including the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, the YWCA City of New York John La Farge Memorial Award for Interracial Justice, and the Guy R. Brewer Humanitarian Award, reflecting the profound impact of her work on both local and national levels; she was an active member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Northern Manhattan Alumnae Chapter and was selected to receive the sorority's Althea T.L. Simmons Social Action Award in August 2010; Dr. Dukes was Incorporated in 2007 as a Pi Eta Kappa Fellow and her biography has been selected for publication in many journals and directories including Fisk University Library, Minority Women Contribution, American Biographical Institute Personalities of Northeast, Who's Who Among American Women and Who's Who Among Black Women; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hazel Dukes has shown outstanding commitment to education, leadership, and community service; she was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the City University of New York Law School at Queens College in 1990, an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn, New York, in 2009, and a similar honor from Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine in Harlem, New York, in 2012; Dr. Dukes has also held leadership roles, including serving as the former President of the Metro-Manhattan Links Chapter and being appointed the National Links NGO Representative in 2010; her contributions to higher education include serving as a trustee for both the State University of New York and Stillman College; additionally, she has been an advocate for social justice and public health through her involvement with the National Council of Negro Women, Inc., and the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, In recognition of her lifelong commitment to civil rights, a street in Roslyn Heights, New York, where Dr. Hazel Dukes once resided, was named "Dr. Hazel Dukes Way" in her honor, serving as a lasting tribute to her legacy; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hazel Dukes resided in Harlem, New York, where she continued her advocacy and community involvement until her passing; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hazel Dukes' passing is an immense loss to the civil rights community and the nation as a whole, yet her legacy will live on in the policies she helped shape, the lives she uplifted, and the generations she inspired; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pauses in its deliberations to mourn the passing of Dr. Hazel Nell Dukes, to recognize and celebrate her lifelong dedication to civil rights and public service, and to express its deepest gratitude for her contributions to a more just and equitable society; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Dr. Hazel Nell Dukes, the NAACP National Office, and the NAACP New York State Conference as a token of appreciation for her extraordinary work and enduring impact.