

**BY:** Senator CLEARE

**MOURNING** the death of Roberta Flack, one of the most iconic and influential voices in the history of American music

**WHEREAS,** It is the sense of this Legislative Body to honor and pay tribute to those musical geniuses whose commitment and creative talents have contributed to the entertainment and cultural enrichment of their community, the State of New York, the Nation and the world; and

**WHEREAS,** It is with profound sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Roberta Flack, noting the significance of her inspired life and accomplishments; and

**WHEREAS,** Roberta Flack, the magnetic singer and pianist whose intimate blend of soul, jazz and folk made her one of the most popular artists of the 1970s, died on Monday, February 24, 2025, in Manhattan; she was 88; and

**WHEREAS,** Internationally hailed as one of the greatest songstresses of our time, four-time GRAMMY Award winner and Lifetime Achievement Award recipient Roberta Flack will forever remain unparalleled in her ability to tell a story through her music; her songs bring insight into our lives, loves, culture and politics, while effortlessly traversing a broad musical landscape from pop to soul to folk to jazz; and

**WHEREAS,** Roberta Flack made history as the first solo artist to win the GRAMMY Award for Record of the Year in two consecutive years; her song, "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face," took home the 1973 GRAMMY, followed by "Killing Me Softly With His Song," which won the award in 1974; and

**WHEREAS,** Classically trained on the piano from an early age, Roberta Flack received a music scholarship at the age of 15 to attend Howard University; after spending 10 years as a schoolteacher and performing nights in downtown Washington, D.C., Roberta Flack zoomed to worldwide stardom in 1972, after her version of "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" was featured in a Clint Eastwood film; and

**WHEREAS,** The song had been released three years earlier, on her debut album for Atlantic Records, but came out as a single only after the film was released; within weeks it was at No. 1 on the Billboard chart - a perch she would reclaim two more times, with "Killing Me Softly With His Song" (1973) and "Feel Like Makin' Love" (1974); and

**WHEREAS,** With a string of hits including, "Where Is the Love," "The Closer I Get to You," "Tonight I Celebrate My Love," and "Set the Night to Music," Roberta Flack has inspired countless artists with her musical brilliance and honesty; and

**WHEREAS,** From her inaugural album's first track - "Compared to

What," Roberta Flack frequently sang songs of social frustration and racial solidarity; and

**WHEREAS,** One of her most tender and affecting performances came alongside Donny Hathaway on "Be Real Black for Me," a song of love and mutual admiration; it was later famously sampled by the rapper Scarface on his 2002 single "On My Block"; and

**WHEREAS,** Furthermore, in performance, she and Donny Hathaway recast "Somewhere," the Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim Broadway hit, as a declaration of Black solidarity and resolution; and

**WHEREAS,** In addition to her renowned music career, Roberta Flack founded the Roberta Flack School of Music at the Hyde Leadership Charter School in the Bronx, providing an innovative and inspiring music education program to underprivileged students free of charge; and

**WHEREAS,** Roberta Flack was also a staunch advocate of gay rights; she sang "Ballad of the Sad Young Men" on her debut album, as well as the theme song to "Making Love," a 1982 film about a man grappling with his sexual identity; and

**WHEREAS,** In 2010, she founded The Roberta Flack Foundation with a mission to support music education, promote the arts, and offer assistance to underprivileged communities; through various initiatives, the foundation seeks to nurture young talent, provide access to arts programs, and use music as a tool for social change; and

**WHEREAS,** Known for her soulful voice, powerful performances, and timeless songs, Roberta Flack's music, which transcended genres and touched the hearts of millions, leaves behind a legacy that will continue to inspire future generations; she leaves behind a profound impact on the cultural landscape, and her absence will be deeply felt by fans and fellow musicians alike; her creative spirit, boundless talent, and lasting impact on both music and the broader world will forever be honored and remembered; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED,** That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Roberta Flack, and to express its deepest condolences to her family; and be it further

**RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Roberta Flack.