

BY: Senator MARTINS

COMMEMORATING the 100th Anniversary of the Cleary
School for the Deaf

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and commend those institutions of true purpose and high achievement whose exemplary programs and accomplishment clearly demonstrate an enduring pursuit of excellence for the citizens and youth of this great Empire State; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Cleary School for the Deaf, to be celebrated on Monday, June 23, 2025, at a barbecue and "Walk Down Memory Lane" at the Nesconset Campus; and

WHEREAS, The Cleary School for the Deaf had its beginning in 1925 when Rosemary Cleary opened Camp Peter Pan, the first summer camp for the deaf in the United States; it accepted children aged three to eight and offered lessons in speech, language, and lip reading, affording educational goals as well as camping activities and games; and

WHEREAS, Rosemary Cleary was the visionary who taught at St. Joseph's School for the Deaf, in the Bronx, New York for 20 years; she additionally established a school at her father's residence in Ronkonkoma, New York, filling an important need for such an institution on Long Island; this new school admitted students at the age of three, likely becoming the first nursery school for the deaf in the nation, and was staffed by Rosemary Cleary and her sisters, Genevieve, Irene, Florence; Min Jordan was also an early employee; and

WHEREAS, In 1960, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Rockville Centre took ownership of Cleary Deaf Child Center at the request of Rosemary Cleary; the Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood joined the staff and later assumed administration, while Catholic Charities provided financial support, including state fund supplements and capital improvements; and

WHEREAS, In 1970, Cleary School for the Deaf was designated a state-supported school for the deaf, with Sister Loyola Marie Curtin as its first superintendent; leadership changes occurred in 1973, with Sister Doris Batt as superintendent and Sister Virginia Barry as the principal; the school embraced the Total Communication Philosophy in 1975, which combined various communication methods such as sign language, speech, and auditory training; and

WHEREAS, The New York State Association of Educators of the Deaf (NYS AED) benefited the school, and Cleary School for the Deaf hosted its annual convention in 1976; the school expanded in 1979 with an Infant Program for children from birth to age three, and a secondary program at Mercy High School; this new initiative fostered a strong partnership

between families, teachers, and students; and

WHEREAS, In 1983, Sister Catherine Fitzgibbon became the superintendent, and Sister Eileen Kelly became the principal; the administration advanced the Total Communication Philosophy, added remedial education, therapy services, and a diagnostic center; and

WHEREAS, As a result, enrollment grew, and additional space was created after the last Cleary sister passed away in 1985; between 1984 and 1990, multiple renovations and expansions took place, including an art studio, storage facilities, a faculty room, and a dance room; Cleary School for the Deaf later underwent further renovations with the support of Ronald Parr, adding an assembly hall, modern kitchen, dining hall, new library, and upgraded classrooms; and

WHEREAS, An increase in students with additional disabilities led to new outdoor therapeutic playgrounds in 1987; that same year, Cleary School for the Deaf's secondary program moved to East Islip High School; and

WHEREAS, In 1990, the Cleary School for the Deaf pursued and achieved a 20-year accreditation from the Middle States Association, becoming the first school for the deaf to do so; this process led to the adoption of a Bi-Lingual, Bi-Cultural ("Bi-Bi") philosophy in 1991, making the school the first New York school to use ASL as its primary language of instruction; experts in Deaf Culture and ASL justly visited Cleary to enhance learning; and

WHEREAS, Advancements in cochlear implants created a need for specialized programs; in 2002, the Cleary School for the Deaf launched an Auditory-Oral Preschool Program; the program helps deaf students transition into mainstream education; from 2014-2015, the school introduced a monumental state-approved integrated class with co-teaching to address both general and auditory learning needs; and

WHEREAS, Leadership changes occurred in the 2000s, with Ken Morseon becoming the superintendent in 2005, Ellen McCarthy becoming principal in 2006, and in 2013, Dr. Jacqueline Simms became the executive director; and

WHEREAS, Today, the Cleary School for the Deaf remains a leading resource on deaf education in Suffolk County, continuing to expand under Dr. Simms' leadership; the school now operates across five campuses, including Nesconset and four others within the East Islip School District; and

WHEREAS, The Cleary School for the Deaf is proudly aware of its distinguished past, eager to fulfill its present commitment to parents, students, and the community, and is prepared with a meaningful vision and distinct sense of purpose for the ebb and flow of growth and change it will encounter in the years to come; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Cleary School for the Deaf; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Cleary School for the Deaf.