

**BY:** Senator MAYER

**COMMENDING** St. Frances African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church of Port Chester, New York, upon the occasion of celebrating its 176th Anniversary on May 4, 2025

**WHEREAS,** Religious institutions and the many spiritual, social, and educational benefits they confer play a vital role in the development of the moral fabric of a responsible citizenry; and

**WHEREAS,** It is the tradition of this State and this Nation to pay tribute to those institutions and individuals who have contributed to the ethical and spiritual values of their communities; and

**WHEREAS,** This Legislative Body takes pleasure in commending St. Frances African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church of Port Chester, New York, upon the occasion of its 176th Anniversary to be celebrated on May 4, 2025; and

**WHEREAS,** St. Frances African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was founded in the spring of 1849 at the home of "Auntie Banks," and the initial gatherings centered around prayers and testimonial services; and

**WHEREAS,** Those who attended early services at the home of "Auntie Banks" often traveled far to find African Methodist Episcopal Zion churches; with a desire to bring this type of church to their own community, the gatherings continued to grow, and a circuit preacher, Father Tappan, was appointed to officially preside over the church in 1850; and

**WHEREAS,** In 1856, the congregation moved to their first house of worship, and the Reverend Jephtha Barcroft was appointed as their full-time pastor; and

**WHEREAS,** Despite being faced with two devastating fires that destroyed two church buildings throughout its history, St. Frances African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church persevered and continued to rebuild and serve its community; and

**WHEREAS,** St. Frances African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church stands as the oldest religious, fraternal, civic, and social organization serving the African-American community in Port Chester, New York, and its surrounding communities; and

**WHEREAS,** Many older members of sister churches in the area began their religious life in St. Frances African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church because it was the only church serving people of color when they moved to New York from the south, other parts of the United States, and the Caribbean Islands; and

**WHEREAS,** Throughout its 176 years of service, many found community,

faith, and family through St. Frances African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; and

**WHEREAS,** St. Frances African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church stands on the threshold of tomorrow, prepared to meet the challenges of the coming decades while retaining that spiritual resolve which characterizes its past; and

**WHEREAS,** It is the custom of this Legislative Body to take note of enduring religious institutions and to bring such institutions to the attention of the people of this Empire State; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED,** That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend St. Frances African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church upon the occasion of celebrating its 176th Anniversary on May 4, 2025, fully confident that this commemoration reflects the belief in those values which enhance the dignity and purpose of life; and be it further

**RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Reverend Lawrence D. Alston of St. Frances African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.