

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the death of Bella Tillis, 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 endeavor served to enhance the quality of life in their communities and the great State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Bella Tillis, of Brooklyn, New York died on April 7, 2013, at the age of 99, just 15 days short of her 100th birthday; and

WHEREAS, Born April 22, 1913, Bella Lipson Tillis graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School where she worked on the school newspaper and met Bernard Tillis, who would eventually become her husband; and

WHEREAS, This exemplary woman distinguished herself in her profession and by her sincere dedication and substantial contribution to the welfare of her community; and

WHEREAS, Bella Tillis attended Hunter College, and later earned a Master's degree in Music Education from Teachers' College of Columbia University; she became a substitute teacher in the New York school system before settling into her career as a full-time high school music teacher in 1941, at Midwood High School in Brooklyn, New York; and

WHEREAS, Bella Tillis' commitment to excellence, and her spirit of humanity, carried over into all fields of enterprise, including charitable and civic endeavors; and

WHEREAS, During her illustrious career with Midwood High School, Bella Tillis created and directed "Sing!", an annual student-produced satirical musical comedy that became a tradition in New York City high schools and continues today; during "Sing!", a school's classes compete against each other, putting on a theatrical production entirely composed, organized and performed by students; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, the productions are an opportunity for students of all backgrounds and interests to come together and work on a creative project, to be performed for the entire school; the 1989 movie "Sing!" was based on the traditions that began with Bella Tillis; and

WHEREAS, Bella Tillis retired from the esteemed position of Director of the Music Department, after 30 years of dedicated service to Midwood High School; and

WHEREAS, Predeceased by her loving husband, Dr. Bernard P. Tillis, Bella Tillis is survived by her sister, Stella Handler; nephews, Stanley H. Lipson, Michael Handler, Robert Handler, and Thomas Handler; niece, Margaret Handler-Kaminsky; 11 grandnieces and nephews; four great-grand-nephews; and one great-grandniece; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit, imbued with a sense of compassion, and comforted by a loving family, Bella Tillis leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all she served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Bella Tillis, distinguished citizen and devoted member of her community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Bella Tillis.