

BY: Senator RANZENHOFER

COMMEMORATING the 150th Anniversary of the New
York State School for the Blind

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize and commend those institutions of true purpose and high achievement whose exemplary programs and accomplishments clearly demonstrate an enduring pursuit of excellence in the education of blind youth in the 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 150th Anniversary of the New York State School for the Blind; and

WHEREAS, On April 27, 1865 an Act was passed by the New York State Legislature which authorized the establishment of The New York State Institution for the Blind in order to educate the young blind children of the State in the usual branches of learning pursued in schools for the seeing, and train them in some appropriate industrial arts which might aid them in gaining a livelihood either under the fostering care of the Institution or through their own individual efforts; and

WHEREAS, In February of 1866, the Building Commissioners met at the Capitol in Albany, New York, for the purpose of selecting a site for the school; they chose a beautiful site in the Village of Batavia, in the County of Genesee, which was known for its general good health, and freedom from epidemic and endemic diseases; the 50-acre area had an abundance of water and a much-needed railroad station for transporting students to and from their homes; and

WHEREAS, In April of 1866, the five Commissioners appointed the nine Trustees to manage the school program, and John Gould was appointed President of the Board of Trustees; and

WHEREAS, Four months later, the Board of Trustees selected William H. Churchman as Superintendent of the New York State Institution for the Blind; from 1866-1868, he worked with the Board to organize the construction of the new building in Batavia; and

WHEREAS, On September 6, 1866, a ceremony was held by the citizens of Batavia to celebrate the laying of the cornerstone for the new school building; and

WHEREAS, On July 15, 1868, the buildings were finally completed, and the commissioners delivered the keys to the School's Board of Trustees; this monumental occasion was celebrated with a procession of state officials, Trustees, Commissioners and contractors led by the Batavia Cornet Band from the village to the grounds; and

WHEREAS, In August of 1868, Dr. Asa D. Lord assumed the position of

Superintendent of the New York Institution for the Blind; one month later, he welcomed 17 students to the brand new school; by the end of the school year, that number had increased to 65 children; and

WHEREAS, All blind persons of suitable age and capacity for instruction, who are legal residents of the State, were entitled to the privileges of the Institution without charge, and for such a period of time as may be deemed expedient by the Trustees; and

WHEREAS, The pupils were classified into four divisions, primary, secondary, intermediate and junior, and spent six hours in the school room Monday through Friday, and three hours on Saturday learning reading, spelling and definitions, writing, arithmetic, geography, English grammar, history, natural philosophy, moral cultures, Sabbath instruction, vocal and instrumental music, as well as knitting, crocheting, and beadwork; and

WHEREAS, In 1925, the name of the school changed from the New York Institute for the Blind to the New York State School for the Blind, and the school was placed under the management of the New York State Education Department; and

WHEREAS, Today, the New York State School for the Blind continues to provide a learning environment where children can achieve their full potential; teachers with professional preparation in the areas of visual impairment and special education work as a team to promote independence and prepare children for successful transitions to adulthood; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to extend its highest commendation to all of the individuals who have been involved with the New York State School for the Blind, past and present, noting the importance of their work and their enduring commitment to blind children; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the New York State School for the Blind; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the New York State School for the Blind.