Senate Resolution No. 5783

BY: Senator MONTGOMERY

COMMEMORATING the 50th Anniversary of the Weeksville Heritage Center

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to commend those illustrious organizations of the State of New York whose focus and intent have made a substantial impact on the quality of life in their communities; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Weeksville Heritage Center; and

WHEREAS, The Weeksville Heritage Center is a multidisciplinary museum dedicated to preserving and celebrating the history of Weeksville, a nineteenth century free black community located in what is now the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn, New York; and

WHEREAS, Originally the Society for the Preservation of Weeksville and Bedford-Stuyvesant History, the Weeksville Heritage Center was founded by Joan Maynard, an artist and Brooklyn resident, in 1968, after Pratt Institute professor James Hurley discovered four wood-framed houses; and

WHEREAS, The houses, largely forgotten and hidden from view, were mere vestiges of those formed in Weeksville in the 1830s by James Weeks, a former slave; and

WHEREAS, During this time, the community realized these historic homes were in threat of being demolished and the Center was established in an effort to restore, protect and convert them into an interactive black history museum; and

WHEREAS, Today, under the able leadership of Rob Fields, the Weeksville Heritage Center focuses on maintaining the integrity of these historic structures while offering educational programs to the public; these programs include an oral history with StoryCorps, extensive research on the history of the community, and guided tours of the Hunterfly Road houses; and

WHEREAS, The Weeksville Heritage Center also houses a collection of artifacts from the archaeological digs which took place two blocks from the houses in 1968; three of the four buildings have undergone major renovations to reflect specific time periods, and the space surrounding the four houses has been re-landscaped to include a community garden; and

WHEREAS, Remaining true to its mission, the Weeksville Heritage Center documents, preserves and interprets the history of free African American communities in Weeksville, Brooklyn and beyond and creates and inspires innovative, contemporary uses of African American history

through education, the arts, and civic engagement; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, using a contemporary lens, the Weeksville Heritage Center activates this unique history through the presentation of innovative, vanguard and experimental programs; and

WHEREAS, Over its distinguished 50-year history, the Weeksville Heritage Center has demonstrated continuous service to the residents and communities which it serves; and

WHEREAS, The success of the Weeksville Heritage Center is in direct correlation to the efforts of its dedicated staff and Board of Directors, whose involvement is, and always has been, characterized by an impressive commitment, an unbridled enthusiasm, and an uncompromising standard of excellence in all endeavors on behalf of the organization and the community it serves; and

WHEREAS, This auspicious occasion presents an opportunity for this Legislative Body to recognize and pay tribute to Weeksville Heritage Center; and

WHEREAS, In light of its commitment, dedication and successful efforts, it is the custom of this Legislative Body to extend its highest commendation to Weeksville Heritage Center of Brooklyn, New York; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Weeksville Heritage Center; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Rob Fields, President and Executive Director, Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn, New York.