Senate Resolution No. 908

BY: Senator HARCKHAM

MOURNING the death of Jacqueline Odessa Baker, dedicated educator, distinguished citizen, and devoted member of her community

WHEREAS, There are certain outstanding members of our community who, through their selfless commitment and dedication, have served to better the quality of life in our community and have had a measurable positive impact on the lives of its residents; Jacqueline Odessa Baker was one such individual; and

WHEREAS, It is with profound sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Jacqueline Odessa Baker, noting the significance of her purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Jacqueline Odessa Baker of Yorktown Heights, New York, died on Monday, June 13, 2022, at the age of 62; and

WHEREAS, Jacqueline Odessa Baker was born on August 26, 1959, in Bedford-Stuyvesant Brooklyn, at Kings County Hospital to Norvell and Olivia Baker; strong-willed, determined, and independent, she grew up to become a woman of family and community with a sharp wit and an exuberant personality; and

WHEREAS, With a keen sense of focus and passion for education, Jacqueline Odessa Baker was a successful student; she and her sister were part of the first cohort of students to be bussed from their majority Black neighborhood to attend newly integrated schools in Borough Park Brooklyn; she was a scholar from elementary school at PS 230, Montauk Junior High School, to Evander High School; and

WHEREAS, Jacqueline Odessa Baker continued her education at the College of Mount Saint Vincent where she received a degree in Early Childhood Education before enrolling in Hunter College to pursue a Master's degree in Education; and

WHEREAS, This extraordinary woman began her illustrious career as a special education teacher in the City of Manhattan; after a few years, she landed a position in the Yonkers Public School District where she remained a dedicated educator for 35 years; and

WHEREAS, Beyond the classroom, Jacqueline Odessa Baker was passionate about community engagement and volunteerism; she was active in the Yonkers Federation of Teachers, the New York State United Teachers Civil and Human Rights Committee, and the NAACP; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, she served as a district leader for the Yorktown Democratic Party, and as the Vice-President for the Peekskill Chapter of the Westchester Black Women's Political Caucus; she gave tirelessly of her time and energies to important causes, and this advocacy only increased during her retirement; and

WHEREAS, Perhaps her greatest advocacy work was in the founding of her non-profit, the Westchester Sickle Cell Disease Outreach, in 2019;

under her able leadership as CEO, this vital organization brings awareness and support for sickle cell disease patients and families living in Westchester County where they can learn from each other to build their strength, body, and mind to live longer, healthier lives; she was honored globally for her tireless efforts to raise sickle cell awareness; and

WHEREAS, In her free time, Jacqueline Odessa Baker enjoyed traveling to new places and bringing back a refrigerator magnet from each destination; she also enjoyed visiting new restaurants and sampling new cuisines; her love for films was infectious; affectionately known as Ms. Pottery Barn, she loved to decorate her home, carefully selecting art and knick-knacks that represented her taste and culture; and

WHEREAS, Jacqueline Odessa Baker was a collector of memories who dedicated time to photography and assembling photo albums filled with the precious memories of family and friends; she truly loved passionately and furiously, always showing up for her family and friends in ways both known and unknown; Jacqueline lived a full life on her own terms; and

WHEREAS, Jacqueline Odessa Baker is survived by three sisters, Loretta Halyard, Janet Rivers, and Nadine Baker; two sons, Norvell P. Davis and Khalil K. Davis (Theresa S. Thames); and one beloved grandchild, Layla N. Davis; as well as a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends; and

WHEREAS, Jacqueline Odessa Baker's infinite selflessness and benevolence will shine on through her family's vivid and happy memories; her insight and strength will forever serve as a beacon of love, light and hope to the countless lives she touched; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Jacqueline Odessa Baker leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all who were privileged to have known and loved such an amazing woman; she will be deeply missed and truly merits the grateful tribute of this Legislative Body; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Jacqueline Odessa Baker, and to express its deepest condolences to her family; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Jacqueline Odessa Baker.