

**BY:** Senator PARKER

**HONORING** the Young, Gifted, & Black Entrepreneurial Awards for its commitment to recognizing excellence, service, and cultural leadership, and bestowing the Lifetime Achievement Award to Cassandra Harris Lockwood

**WHEREAS,** It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and commend institutions and initiatives that uplift communities by celebrating excellence, service, creativity, justice, and visionary leadership, and that affirm the enduring value of civic engagement, cultural expression, and community stewardship; and

**WHEREAS,** Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to honor the Young, Gifted, & Black Entrepreneurial Awards, upon the occasion of its presentation of the Lifetime Achievement Award in Community Service and Outreach on Wednesday, February 25, 2026, recognizing a lifetime of service and transformative impact within the Black and global community; and

**WHEREAS,** Established in 2006 by founder Carl Gray, the Young, Gifted, & Black Entrepreneurial Awards is a nonprofit organization dedicated to recognizing and celebrating distinguished individuals of color across the Americas, the Caribbean, and Africa, whose leadership, perseverance, creativity, and service have made meaningful and lasting contributions across business, education, the arts, philanthropy, and community development, while uplifting stories of excellence that might otherwise go unrecognized; and

**WHEREAS,** In furtherance of this mission, the Young, Gifted, & Black Entrepreneurial Awards has selected Cassandra Harris Lockwood as the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award in Community Service and Outreach, in recognition of more than five decades of visionary leadership at the intersection of art, activism, journalism, and grassroots community empowerment; and

**WHEREAS,** Born in Washington, D.C., in 1951 and raised in rural Upstate New York, Cassandra Harris Lockwood emerged early as a leader and advocate, attaining state-level student leadership during the transformative social movements of the 1960s, experiences that shaped her lifelong commitment to justice, equity, and cultural expression; and

**WHEREAS,** A graduate of Kirkland College with a degree in fine arts and dance, Cassandra Harris Lockwood distinguished herself as a trailblazer for gender equity, becoming the first female construction worker in New York State and advancing opportunities for women in labor during a period of entrenched institutional exclusion; and

**WHEREAS,** Her artistic excellence earned advanced training at the Alvin Ailey Dance Studio, the Dance Theatre of Harlem, and the George

Faison School of Dance, and during this period she further shattered barriers as the first woman licensed to drive a Hansom cab in New York City, reflecting courage, determination, and resilience; and

**WHEREAS,** Cassandra Harris Lockwood's professional career included work on Broadway and off Broadway productions such as Raisin, Bubbling Brown Sugar, The Wiz, and Wine in the Wilderness, while also cultivating a multidimensional artistic practice encompassing music, playwriting, healing arts, metaphysics, and community-centered creative expression; and

**WHEREAS,** Returning to Utica, New York, in 1979, Cassandra Harris Lockwood united her artistic vision with direct community action, serving as Lead Organizer for Corn Hill People United and dedicating her life to empowering individuals and families through advocacy, self-determination, and grassroots organizing; and

**WHEREAS,** In 2002, she founded For The Good, Inc., a nonprofit devoted to arts, education, and community development, and launched Utica Phoenix, the city's first Black newspaper, creating a lasting platform for underrepresented voices and cultural representation in Central New York; and

**WHEREAS,** Through pioneering cultural productions, community journalism, children's music, and decades of civic engagement, Cassandra Harris Lockwood has demonstrated that culture is not merely artistic expression, but a powerful instrument for justice, unity, healing, and human dignity; and

**WHEREAS,** The Lifetime Achievement Award in Community Service and Outreach, bestowed by the Young, Gifted, & Black Entrepreneurial Awards, fittingly reflects the organization's commitment to honoring lives of sustained service, cultural leadership, and community transformation; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED,** That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor the Young, Gifted, & Black Entrepreneurial Awards for its continued commitment to recognizing excellence, service, and cultural leadership, and for bestowing the Lifetime Achievement Award in Community Service and Outreach upon Cassandra Harris Lockwood; and be it further

**RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Young, Gifted, & Black Entrepreneurial Awards, and to Cassandra Harris Lockwood, as an expression of the highest esteem and appreciation of this Legislative Body.