

BY: Senator CLEARE

COMMEMORATING the 100th Anniversary of the
founding of the Savoy Ballroom

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to honor and pay tribute to those institutions and organizations whose commitment to promoting art and community has contributed to the strength, history, and cultural enrichment of the State and Nation; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the Savoy Ballroom of Harlem, New York; and

WHEREAS, Located on Lenox Avenue between 140th and 141st Street in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City, the Savoy Ballroom opened on March 12, 1926, and was a large ballroom for music and public dancing founded by Jay Faggen and Moe Gale and managed by Charles Buchanan; and

WHEREAS, The Savoy Ballroom was a staple in its community, with people calling it the "heartbeat of Harlem," the "soul of the neighborhood," and the "world's finest ballroom"; every year, the ballroom was visited by nearly 700,000 people; and

WHEREAS, Built to be luxurious, classy, glamorous, and memorable, the Savoy Ballroom was 10,000 square feet in size, held up to 4,000 people, and boasted mirrored walls, a double bandstand, sprung layered wood floors, a cut glass chandelier, and a marble staircase; and

WHEREAS, To meet the ambitious goal of becoming a luxurious integrated ballroom, the Savoy Ballroom was modeled after Jay Faggen's downtown Roseland Ballroom, which was primarily visited by European Americans, and it was named after the Savoy Hotel, a prominent and elite upscale London hotel; and

WHEREAS, Unlike many ballrooms of its time, the Savoy Ballroom had a no-discrimination policy, and those who visited the ballroom stated that the ability to dance was more important than anything else; due to the no-discrimination policy, the Savoy Ballroom gave rising talented and passionate Black dancers and performers an equally beautiful venue to perform in; and

WHEREAS, Patrons who visited the Savoy Ballroom were free to express themselves with dance, and the creativity in the room resulted in the popularization of many dances such as the Lindy Hop, the Jitterbug, the Flying Charleston, Jive, Snakehips, Rhumboogie, and variations of the Shimmy and Mambo; dancing required the floors to be replaced every three years due to frequent use; and

WHEREAS, Due to the double bandstand at the Savoy Ballroom, music was always playing and dancing never stopped; successful musicians that

performed at the ballroom include Chick Webb, Ella Fitzgerald, Al Cooper, Erskine Hawkins, Lucky Millinder, Wynonie Harris, Buddy Johnson, and Cootie Williams; and

WHEREAS, Despite its massive success and influence on culture and the local community, the Savoy Ballroom went out of business in October of 1958, and the ballroom was demolished between March and April of 1959 to make room for the construction of a housing complex; and

WHEREAS, On May 26, 2002, Frankie Manning and Norma Miller, who were known dancers at the Savoy Ballroom, dedicated a commemorative plaque for the Savoy Ballroom on the block where it once stood; and

WHEREAS, Since its founding, the Savoy Ballroom has been the subject and inspiration for music, film, dance, and more, including Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong's duet, "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" and Floating World Pictures' documentary, **The Savoy King**; and

WHEREAS, The Savoy Ballroom was one of the first integrated ballrooms in the Nation, and its unique glamour and atmosphere were loved by all who visited; while the ballroom no longer exists, its legacy and impact on dance, music, and culture lives on; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the Savoy Ballroom.