Assembly Resolution No. 486

BY: M. of A. Reyes

RECOGNIZING Lisa Cortes for her valuable contributions to the film, television, music, and entertainment industries

WHEREAS, It is the tradition of this Legislative Body to recognize and acknowledge those distinguished citizens who, by means of their knowledge, passion, and dedication, reach admirable levels of success in their careers, while simultaneously strengthening the cultural fabric of this great 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 recognize Lisa Cortes for her valuable contributions to the film, television, music, and entertainment industries; and

WHEREAS, An alumnus of New York Film Academy, Lisa Cortes is a Grammy-nominated and Emmy Award-winning director and producer renowned for her bold and empowering art that brings important stories often hidden out of view to the forefront of the media industry; and

WHEREAS, Originally hailing from Milford, Connecticut, Lisa Cortes grew up participating in piano recitals and children's theater productions--both of which instilled a deeper level of confidence and appreciation for storytelling which have been a valuable foundation for her illustrious career; and

WHEREAS, After graduating from Milford Academy as valedictorian, Lisa Cortes attended Yale University where she earned a Bachelor of American Studies degree with a focus on Black literature; and

WHEREAS, One of Lisa Cortes' great interests includes music; working her first job at the recording label Def Jam during an era when hip-hop music was growing fast in popularity allowed her to learn and prosper; she went on to become the vice president of A&R at Mercury Records; and

WHEREAS, A trailblazer at heart, during her tenure with A&R at Mercury Records, a division of PolyGram Records, Lisa Cortes developed new recording artists and launched her own music recording label known as Loose Cannon Records; this monumental achievement solidified her as the first African American woman with her own label with a major record company; and

WHEREAS, Following many rich life experiences and a rediscovered love of storytelling, Lisa Cortes became the founder and president of Cortes Filmworks--a New York City based multimedia production company committed to telling complex, powerful stories from new perspectives, elevating the talent often overlooked by the mainstream media; and

WHEREAS, Cortes Filmworks, under the able and insightful leadership of Lisa Cortes, aims to produce scripted and unscripted properties

spanning music, social justice, crime, and other notable topics; and

WHEREAS, The portfolio of films by Cortes Filmworks include: "Little Richard: I am Everything"; "The Space Race"; "Invisible Beauty"; "The Melt Goes on Forever"; "All In: The Fight for Democracy"; "The Apollo"; "The Remix: Hip Hop X Fashion"; "The Woodsman"; and "Precious"; and

WHEREAS, Lisa Cortes' film productions have received over 80 international awards and nominations, and in 2023, the Black Film Critics Circle selected her for its Pioneer Award; and

WHEREAS, In acknowledgement of her admirable talent, Lisa Cortes has been featured at world-renowned film festivals, including Sundance Film Festival and Tribeca Film Festival; the masterful works she helped direct and produce--"Little Richard: I Am Everything," "Invisible Beauty," and "The Space Race,"--were honored at Sundance with the former film being chosen as the opening night selection in the U.S. Documentary Competition--a highly prestigious and commendable accomplishment; and

WHEREAS, Lisa Cortes co-produced "The Woodsman," starring Kevin Bacon and Kyra Sedgwick (2004); produced "Shadowboxer," starring Helen Mirren and Cuba Gooding Jr., (2005); and "Tennessee," starring Mariah Carey (2008); in 2009, she executive-produced "Precious," which won two Academy Awards, the Sundance Audience Award, and the Sundance Grand Jury Prize for Best Drama; and

WHEREAS, Further, Lisa Cortes produced HBO's "The Apollo," a documentary that examines African American cultural and political history through the lens of the legendary Apollo Theater; the film earned her the 2020 Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Documentary or Nonfiction Special; and

WHEREAS, Lisa Cortes' latest project, a true crime series entitled "Murder Has Two Faces," shines a social justice light on harrowing, lesser-known cases that were eclipsed in the media by more notorious murders; her work aims to bring about justice for victims and confront biases that exist in these tragedies, especially with BIPOC women and girls, while challenging the narrative around whose stories get told and why; and

WHEREAS, For her numerous and invaluable contributions to filmmaking, television, arts, music, entertainment, advocacy, and social justice, Lisa Cortes was inducted into the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame in 2023; and

WHEREAS, Lisa Cortes' dedicated work in uplifting diverse identities, stories, and experiences through music and filmmaking helps promote understanding, inclusion, and justice; her art is a powerful tool for storytelling, cultural expression, and social change, and deserves the recognition and applause from this Legislative Body; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to recognize Lisa Cortes for her valuable contributions to the film, television, music, and entertainment industries; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Lisa Cortes.