Assembly Resolution No. 505

BY: M. of A. Morinello

HONORING Dr. Joseph V. Scelsa upon the occasion of his designation for special recognition by the New York Conference of Italian American Legislators on May 19, 2025

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize and pay tribute to individuals of distinguished purpose whose lifework and civic engagement have profoundly contributed to the advancement of cultural heritage and the enrichment of society; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to honor Dr. Joseph V. Scelsa upon the occasion of his designation for special recognition by the New York Conference of Italian American Legislators on Monday, May 19, 2025; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Joseph V. Scelsa, a native of the Bronx, is being honored for his extraordinary contributions to the preservation and promotion of Italian American history, culture, and civil rights; and

WHEREAS, A visionary educator and cultural leader, Joseph V. Scelsa received his doctorate in Sociology and Education from Columbia University's Teachers College, where he authored a dissertation on "Constructive Pluralism"; he also holds three Master's degrees in Sociology, Social Studies, and Counseling, and is a licensed Mental Health Counselor in the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, In 1984, Dr. Joseph V. Scelsa was appointed Director of the Italian American Institute of The City University of New York, which was renamed the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute in 1987 in honor of the late State Senator John D. Calandra; he became Dean of the Institute in 1999 and served with distinction as Vice President for Outreach and Cultural Affairs at Queens College, CUNY; and

WHEREAS, A pioneer in media and public education, Dr. Joseph V. Scelsa created and served as Executive Producer and Host of ITALICS: The Italian-American Magazine, a nationally broadcast program co-produced with CUNY-TV; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Joseph V. Scelsa was instrumental in organizing the landmark 1999 New York Historical Society exhibition, The Italians of New York: Five Centuries of Struggle and Achievement, which drew over 100,000 visitors, and inspired him to found the Italian American Museum in 2001, where he continues to serve as President; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Joseph V. Scelsa has authored and edited numerous scholarly works on ethnicity, education, and civil rights, and is widely recognized as a leading expert in Italian American studies and civil rights advocacy; and

WHEREAS, He has been honored nationally and internationally, receiving the rank of Cavaliere, Ufficiale, and Commendatore in the Order of Merit of the Republic of Italy, the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, the Governor's Award for Excellence, and recognition from the Italian Consul General in New York; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Joseph V. Scelsa has been a lifelong advocate for Italian American causes, serving on numerous boards and committees including the National Italian American Foundation, the Order Sons of Italy in America, and the Columbus Citizens Foundation, among many others; and

WHEREAS, Under Dr. Joseph V. Scelsa's leadership, the Italian American Museum acquired the historic Banca Stabile site in Manhattan's Little Italy and expanded the museum's footprint from 1,600 to 7,000 square feet, with a grand reopening planned for 2024; and

WHEREAS, His tireless efforts following the 2009 Abruzzi earthquake resulted in a successful national fundraising campaign, culminating in the donation of $110,000 to Italy's Ministry of Cultural Affairs, for which he was awarded the Ministry's Medal of Honor; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Joseph V. Scelsa's enduring legacy is one of intellectual rigor, public service, cultural preservation, and an unyielding commitment to justice, community empowerment, and the Italian American experience; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor Dr. Joseph V. Scelsa upon the occasion of his designation for special recognition by the New York Conference of Italian American Legislators on May 19, 2025, and to commend him for his unparalleled contributions to education, civil rights, and Italian American culture; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Dr. Joseph V. Scelsa.