

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 157

Commending the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 31, 2022

Agreed to by the Senate, February 3, 2022

WHEREAS, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University in Fairfax County, one of the premier lifelong learning institutes in the United States, celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2021; and

WHEREAS, originally known as the Learning in Retirement Institute, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University (OLLI-Mason) was founded in 1991 and was the brainchild of the Fairfax Commission on Aging and visionary leader Kathryn Brooks, who wanted to establish educational and social opportunities for a growing base of active seniors in Northern Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the Learning in Retirement Institute soon became affiliated with George Mason University as part of the university's strategic vision to extend its learning mission into the community, including to seniors interested in maintaining an active intellectual life; and

WHEREAS, the Learning in Retirement Institute was generously endowed by the Bernard Osher Foundation of California, a nonprofit organization that has dedicated millions to enhancing the quality of life in the United States through education and the arts; and

WHEREAS, OLLI-Mason's mission is "to offer to its members learning opportunities in a stimulating environment in which adults can share their talents, experiences and skills, explore new interests, discover and develop latent abilities, engage in intellectual and cultural pursuits, and socialize with others of similar interests"; and

WHEREAS, by all measures, OLLI-Mason has fulfilled its goals, and what started as a member-run program with 100 members operating and teaching out of one room in George Mason's Commerce II Building, has burgeoned into a robust, first-rate educational and social institute with 1,100 members; and

WHEREAS, OLLI-Mason currently offers retirees in Northern Virginia more than 600 courses, special events, and excursions, with opportunities to enroll in four terms each year at three campuses in Fairfax, Reston, and Loudoun; from arts to zoology and religion to science, there is a topic to satisfy any interest without the pressures of homework, exams, or grades; and

WHEREAS, the over-50 population in Northern Virginia is thriving and living longer, healthier lives; these trends are expected to continue long into the 21st century, and policymakers at all levels are working vigorously to develop programs and services to help these individuals continue to participate more fully in their communities; and

WHEREAS, since March 2020, an unprecedented number of older Americans are shuttered at home to avoid the serious health risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic; in response, OLLI-Mason adopted an online programming model to offer an intellectual and social lifeline to those students who have been isolated for an extended period of time; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University for its resounding success in serving the educational and social needs of retirees in Northern Virginia on the occasion of the institute's 30th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the institute's foresight of the critical need for programs that expand opportunities for and enhance the quality of life of retirees in Northern Virginia.

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