



HR0250

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1

HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, Henrietta Lacks, a Black woman, was born as
3 Loretta Pleasant to Eliza Lacks Pleasant and John Randal in
4 Roanoke, Virginia on August 1, 1920; she married David Lacks,
5 and they had five children; she passed away from cervical
6 cancer at the age of 31 in Johns Hopkins Hospital's racially
7 segregated "colored ward" in Baltimore, Maryland on October 4,
8 1951, leaving behind her children, husband, and her "immortal
9 cells", known as HeLa cells, that became the foundation for
10 several advances in modern medicine and have saved over 10
11 million lives; she was buried at the Lacks Family Cemetery in
12 Clover, Virginia; and

13 WHEREAS, After her death, a scientist discovered that
14 Henrietta Lacks' DNA cells lived outside of her body and never
15 died; in contrast, all other human cells died after a few hours
16 outside the body; not only did her cells stay alive in the lab,
17 but the cells also replicated every 24 hours; during her
18 treatment, samples of her cancer cells were taken without her
19 knowledge nor her consent; said more emphatically, she did not
20 donate her cervical cancer cells; and

21 WHEREAS, Henrietta Lacks' immortal DNA cells were coined
22 "HeLa", combining the first two letters of her first name and
23 the first two letters of her last name, and were subsequently

1 camouflaged by the scientific community's pseudonym "Helen
2 Lane" rather than Henrietta Lacks; this massive medical
3 breakthrough allowed researchers to conduct experiments on
4 human cells outside of the body, and HeLa cells have played a
5 crucial role in medical science; and

6 WHEREAS, Scientists have continued to use the immortal
7 HeLa cell line all over the world, including in research on the
8 effects of zero gravity in outer space, the development of
9 polio and COVID-19 vaccines, and the study of molecular
10 biology, HIV/AIDS, cloning, COVID-19, in vitro fertilization
11 (IVF), and cancer, including leukemia chemotherapy; and

12 WHEREAS, For decades, Henrietta Lacks' family had no
13 knowledge regarding her immortal DNA cells and the
14 breakthroughs that came from them; it was not until a
15 scientist contacted her children asking for blood samples in
16 1973 that the family learned their mother's cells were being
17 used globally; and

18 WHEREAS, Alfred "Lacks" Carter Jr., the son of Deborah
19 Lacks and the grandson of Henrietta Lacks, is the founder and
20 president of the HeLa House, located in Chicago, and the
21 Henrietta House of Healing; he is a senior advisor to the Lacks
22 family, leads the HELA100 initiative, and is a World Health
23 Organization Goodwill Ambassador for Cervical Cancer

1 Elimination; the 2019 Henrietta Lacks Enhancing Cancer
2 Research Act and House of Appropriation Report 116-450 not
3 only honor the life and legacy of Henrietta Lacks but each also
4 includes a provision for a Government Accountability Office
5 (GAO) study about the diverse representation of patients in
6 cancer clinical trials; and

7 WHEREAS, Alfred "Lacks" Carter Jr. is committed to
8 generously giving his time and talents to preserving Henrietta
9 Lacks' legacy; he hopes to empower and educate others about
10 his grandmother and her medical contributions, and he endorses
11 and promotes clinical research and the impact it has on health
12 and racial disparities; therefore, be it

13 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
14 HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
15 we honor the life and legacy of Henrietta Lacks, an African
16 American woman, whose contributions to medical science have
17 had a lasting impact though her name is not widely known; and
18 be it further

19 RESOLVED, That we recognize Alfred "Lacks" Carter Jr. for
20 his work to preserve Henrietta Lacks' legacy and for his
21 contributions in the fight against cervical cancer; and be it
22 further

1 RESOLVED, That we urge support for community-based
2 research and education programs, which are vital to educating
3 and empowering community members so they can make informed
4 decisions about being involved in clinical research and the
5 research process; and be it further

6 RESOLVED, That we urge support for clinical research to
7 reduce health disparities, to save lives, to gain insights
8 about the safety and effectiveness of drugs and other medical
9 treatments, and to discover treatments for various diseases.