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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1253

By Behn

A RESOLUTION to honor Transgender Day of Visibility and the resilience, contributions, and dignity of the transgender community in Tennessee.

WHEREAS, March 31st is the International Transgender Day of Visibility—a day to honor the achievements, contributions, and enduring resilience of transgender and gender-diverse people everywhere; and

WHEREAS, Transgender Day of Visibility calls on each of us to see, affirm, and stand alongside our transgender neighbors—not just on this day, but every day—and to reckon honestly with the discrimination and harm they continue to face; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee is home to more than 56,100 transgender adults—our neighbors, coworkers, family members, and fellow Tennesseans—who deserve the full protection and dignity that every resident of this State is owed; and

WHEREAS, the Human Rights Campaign has found that since 2015, Tennessee has enacted more anti-LGBTQ+ laws than any other state in the country, including bans on gender-affirming medical care, bathroom restrictions, and targeted rollbacks of basic civil protections—making Tennessee increasingly hostile to transgender people who simply want to live their lives; and

WHEREAS, thirty anti-trans bills were tracked in Tennessee in 2025 alone, and in 2026, this legislature is advancing bills that would allow private citizens to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages, ban Pride flags on government property, and —most alarmingly—create a publicly accessible database of transgender residents, a measure civil rights advocates have compared to state-sanctioned surveillance and a government catalog of identity itself; and

WHEREAS, according to the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's 2025 Annual Survey, 43.9 percent of transgender and gender-expansive adults reported experiencing

discrimination based on their gender identity or expression; 57.6 percent said they are less open about their LGBTQ+ identities than a year ago; and 58.5 percent said they are less visible in daily life—a chilling reminder that fear, not freedom, is shaping the daily reality of transgender Tennesseans; and

WHEREAS, the Human Rights Campaign documented at least thirty-two transgender and gender-expansive people were killed in the United States in 2024, and 56 percent of those killed were Black transgender women—a devastating and disproportionate toll that demands our attention and our action; and

WHEREAS, Advocates for Trans Equality documented twenty-seven additional deaths by violence in the year leading up to Trans Day of Remembrance 2025, with fifty-eight total known transgender deaths in that period, including those lost to suicide—lives cut short by a climate of hostility that this legislature has too often fueled rather than fought; and

WHEREAS, transgender people have always existed, have always resisted, and have always refused to be erased—their history is American history, woven into the fabric of every fight this country has ever waged for freedom and equal dignity; and

WHEREAS, on June 28, 1969, Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera were on the front lines at the Stonewall Inn when patrons fought back against a police raid—two transgender women of color, marginalized and unhoused, who risked everything because they, like all people, believed they deserved to live freely; and

WHEREAS, in 1970, Sylvia Rivera and Marsha Johnson founded the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) and created STAR House on East 2nd Street—the first shelter of its kind in the nation—to provide family support structures for trans youth of color because they knew that survival required both resistance and community care; and

WHEREAS, the transgender community has faced systematic erasure before—pushed to the margins of the very liberation movements they helped build, told their existence was too

controversial, too disruptive, too much—and they kept fighting anyway because that is what it means to be part of a community that has never had the luxury of giving up; and

WHEREAS, today, as the federal government removes transgender people from national monuments, strips protections that have stood for decades, and attempts to legislate transgender identity out of existence, transgender Americans are once again showing the rest of us what resistance looks like—testifying at committee hearings, organizing in their communities, filing lawsuits, running for office, and simply living openly in defiance of a political moment that tells them not to; and

WHEREAS, more than half of transgender adults surveyed say they are less open about their identities than they were a year ago—and yet they are still here, still showing up, still building lives of meaning and joy in communities that too often fail to protect them; and

WHEREAS, history has never been kind to those who tried to legislate people out of existence, and history has always vindicated those who refused to disappear; and

WHEREAS, history was made right here in Nashville when Dr. Marisa Richmond—retired professor, author, and tireless advocate—became the first transgender person elected to the Democratic National Committee; Dr. Richmond has also served on the Nashville Mayor's Council on the Status of Women and the Davidson County General Sessions Court Judicial Equity Collective; and

WHEREAS, Olivia Hill made history as the first transgender person elected to the Nashville Metro Council, proving that representation is possible even in the face of opposition; and

WHEREAS, Chaplain Dahron Johnson broke a barrier for all Tennesseans by becoming the first transgender person to lead the opening prayer on the floor of this State house; and

WHEREAS, across every county in this State, transgender Tennesseans are teachers, nurses, farmers, parents, and public servants—people who get up every day and give to their communities, even as their government too often fails them; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly has an obligation to acknowledge both the courage it takes to live openly as a transgender person in Tennessee today and the responsibility we bear to do better by every Tennessean regardless of who they are; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor Transgender Day of Visibility and the dignity, resilience, and full humanity of transgender Tennesseans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.