

2015 -- H 5448

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2015

H O U S E R E S O L U T I O N

HONORING CHARLES BELK, FOUNDER OF "FITTING THE DESCRIPTION, INC."

Introduced By: Representative Carlos E. Tobon

Date Introduced: February 12, 2015

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, It is fitting that this House recognizes those individuals and organizations
2 who earnestly work toward the betterment of our country and our citizenry; and

3 WHEREAS, Our nation continues to grapple with discrimination and injustice, and while
4 many steps have been taken in the right direction, there is still much work to be done; and

5 WHEREAS, On August 22, 2014, while casually walking to his car after leaving a
6 restaurant, Charles Belk was stopped, detained, handcuffed, and arrested. He was then denied a
7 phone call, initially denied access to his attorney, and held for six hours under a \$100,000 bail all
8 because he very broadly fit the description of the tall, bald and black armed accomplice to the
9 bank robber who was being sought by the police; and

10 WHEREAS, Charles Belk is a graduate of Hillside High School in Durham, North
11 Carolina. He completed his Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering at the
12 University of Southern California, his Master's degree from Indiana University, and an Executive
13 Management certificate from Harvard University School of Business; and

14 WHEREAS, Mr. Belk has worked as a Consultant for the NAACP, a film and television
15 producer, a VP of Marketing for a wireless application company, and a VP of Integrated
16 Promotions for a marketing agency. He has also run Community Affairs for the Atlanta Hawks,
17 was the Deputy Director of Olympic Village Operations for the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games,
18 worked in a number of engineering and managerial positions with IBM, and was a Bond Trader
19 on Wall Street. Although wrongfully and erroneously arrested, on August 14th, Charles Belk
20 became an accused criminal with an arrest record, a mug shot, and fingerprints on file with the

1 police; and

2 WHEREAS, While dealing with the humiliation, the shock, and the horror of being
3 arrested was difficult and painful, Mr. Belk soon discovered that clearing his name proved to be a
4 more frustrating, costly, and a time consuming hurdle, and having a wrongful arrest on your
5 record can and often does affect your future, from trying to get a job to securing an apartment or a
6 loan; and

7 WHEREAS, Turning a negative experience into a learning opportunity became Charles
8 Belk's mantra. He founded the nonprofit "Fitting the Description, Inc." in order to help others
9 deal with clearing their names. The organization works to bring about reform in the criminal
10 justice system and to educate and work with police departments across the country in sensitivity
11 and social awareness training; now, therefore be it

12 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and
13 Providence Plantations hereby honors Charles Belk for founding "Fitting the Description, Inc."
14 and for bringing our nation closer to "making fair treatment a reality for all people"; and be it
15 further

16 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
17 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Mr. Charles Belk.

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