

House Resolution 602

By: Representatives Crawford of the 89th, Tran of the 80th, Au of the 50th, Park of the 107th, and Hong of the 103rd

A RESOLUTION

1 Commending Hyong Kun "Sam" Yi (hereinafter "Sam Yi") for his trailblazing and
2 extraordinary contributions to Georgia's jazz community; and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, Sam Yi was a renowned patron, aficionado, and guiding light of jazz music in
4 Atlanta, having co-founded the celebrated former Atlanta jazz club Churchill Grounds in the
5 historic Fox Theatre building in Midtown; and

6 WHEREAS, Sam Yi was born on May 25, 1963, in Seoul, South Korea, the son of the late
7 Sang Hu Yi and Sang Son Yi, and he immigrated to the United States as an 11-year-old with
8 his parents, eventually settling permanently in the State of Georgia in 1987; and

9 WHEREAS, he was the beloved husband of Ok Hyun "Nina" Yi (née Park), who always
10 supported his vision and dreams; and

11 WHEREAS, Churchill Grounds, which Sam Yi opened on May 1, 1997, became a Mecca
12 for jazz musicians through his steadfast promotion, helping artists maintain a sense of
13 belonging and providing listeners with a venue to hear the latest talent, nurturing improvised
14 music by giving novices and professionals alike a place to hone their craft before enthusiastic
15 audiences; and

16 WHEREAS, in 2003, he expanded Churchill Grounds to include The Whisper Room stage,
17 where high-profile musicians such as Wynton Marsalis, Harry Connick Jr., the Harper
18 Family (Danny, Terry, Terrence, Philip, Darius, and the late Dishan Harper), and Lady Gaga
19 performed, while also giving then-unknown artists their first break, including Russell Gunn,
20 Lizz Wright, Gary Motley, Bernard Linnette, and David Sánchez; and

21 WHEREAS, Churchill Grounds officially closed on July 31, 2016, an occasion marked by
22 a proclamation from the City of Atlanta designating the day as Churchill Grounds Café Day;
23 and

24 WHEREAS, over the past decade, Sam Yi worked toward providing audiences with a new
25 destination for jazz by organizing jam sessions and pop-up performances at Mason Tavern,
26 Apple House, and his own restaurant, Brew & Bird, in Decatur as well as most recently
27 partnering with the club Ten ATL in East Atlanta with hopes of opening a new Churchill
28 Grounds; and

29 WHEREAS, he was the curator and face of an incubator for Atlanta's jazz talent as well as
30 the reason that jazz is alive in the city to this day; and

31 WHEREAS, Sam Yi unfortunately passed away after an illness and joined the ancestors on
32 February 3, 2025; he is survived by his mother, Sang Son Yi; his sister, Lily Yi Giffin; his
33 wife, Nina Yi; and his nieces and nephews; and

34 WHEREAS, it is abundantly fitting and proper that the extraordinary accomplishments of
35 this distinguished Georgian and pillar of the jazz community be appropriately recognized.

36 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
37 the members of this body commend Hyong Kun "Sam" Yi posthumously for his many
38 achievements and express the deepest and most sincere regret at his passing.

39 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
40 and directed to make an appropriate copy of this resolution available for distribution to the
41 family of Hyong Kun "Sam" Yi.