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Mr. Speaker, I rise today during Black History Month with immense gratitude for the selfless community service of philanthropist and retired Tampa Bay Buccaneers player, Gerard (Jerry) A. Bell. Through Mr. Bell's dedication to advancing the success of his neighbors, young and old, our neighborhoods have positively transformed. Mr. Bell devoted his considerable time and talents to improving African American student retention and completion of higher education, and in doing has lifted us all.

Bell was born in Derby, Connecticut, in 1959. He earned his bachelor's degree in computer information systems from Arizona State University where he was a standout Tight End on the Sun Devil's football team and a master's in business administration from the University of Tampa. For the past 20 years, Mr. Bell has served as an adjunct faculty member at Hillsborough Community College, Pasco Hernando State College, and the University of Phoenix. He teaches various college courses in introduction to business, marketing, and personal finance.

Mr. Bell is married to Ruth Bell, his partner in life and in philanthropic and community service. They are notably most proud of their two children, Vanessa and David.

After five seasons as a Tight End for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Mr. Bell pursued his passion outside of the game and entered technology sales during the 1990's, a time when this industry was evolving before the world's eyes. Mr. Bell currently serves as the president and owner of Bell & Associates Business Consultants, Inc., a value-added reseller of information technology where he collaborates with local and national clients.

Community service is at the crux of Mr. Bell's life and purpose. During his time with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, when he was not on the field, he was organizing food drives, tutoring young African American students for their SATs and ACTs, and holding football camps. Mr. Bell has served on numerous local and non-profit boards and he is a proud member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

Mr. Bell's steadfast commitment to advancing student achievement has produced transformative results in diversifying higher education. The Bells were the first African American couple to endow a scholarship at the University of South Florida, and to date have been able to provide

financial assistance to more than 100 students who have successfully obtained a college degree, crediting the Bells' scholarship for their ability to succeed. Currently, Mr. Bell is a founding member of a new initiative at the University of South Florida, the Black Leadership Network, which is focused on the pillars of scholarship, mentorship, and internships for Black students.

Mr. Bell's public service is recognized widely. He was named a Community Hero by the Tampa Bay Lightning Foundation. Additionally, Mr. Bell's commitment to students was honored by the University of South Florida through the President's Distinguished Citizen Award.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Tampa Bay community, I am proud to recognize Gerard (Jerry) A. Bell, for his selfless public service and commitment to educational success and his work in diversity and uplifting the Tampa Bay community one neighborhood at a time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy Castor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathy Castor
United States Representative
Florida – District 14