



State of North Carolina

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

IN RECOGNITION OF ELIZABETH HOBBS KECKLY

2018

BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, Elizabeth Hobbs Keckly (or Keckley) was born in approximately 1818 as a slave in Dinwiddie County, Virginia; in 1835, Hobbs was sent to North Carolina to live and work under the ownership of her master's son, Robert Burwell, minister and headmaster of the Burwell School in Hillsborough; and

WHEREAS, in her 1868 memoir, *Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House*, Keckly recounts brutal treatment at the hands of Burwell and others in the community, including an unnamed man who fathered her son, George, who later assumed the surname Kirkland; and

WHEREAS, after her time in North Carolina, Keckly and her son were moved to St. Louis where she married and, in 1855, was able to purchase her freedom and that of her son with proceeds from her sewing; and

WHEREAS, in 1860, Keckly moved to Washington, D.C., and established a dressmaking business, catering to the wives of politicians; her success in this career led to her being hired by Mary Todd Lincoln to work in the White House; and

WHEREAS, the two women developed a close friendship, which is chronicled in Keckly's memoir through her personal correspondence with the First Lady; as part of her duties, Keckly also assisted President Abraham Lincoln with his hair and clothes before public appearances; and

WHEREAS, Keckly became a prominent figure in the free black community and, in 1862, founded the Contraband Relief Association, later called the Ladies' Freedmen and Soldier's Relief Association, to provide assistance for former slaves; and

WHEREAS, throughout 2018, the Historic Hillsborough Commission is celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Elizabeth Hobbs Keckly with a year-long series of programs; her story continues to be commemorated in North Carolina through interpretations at the Burwell School Historic Site in Hillsborough;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ROY COOPER, Governor of the State of North Carolina, do hereby proclaim November 10, 2018, "**IN RECOGNITION OF ELIZABETH HOBBS KECKLY**" in North Carolina, and commend its observance to all citizens.





Roy Cooper
Governor

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Great Seal of the State of North Carolina at the Capitol in Raleigh this eighth day of November in the year of our Lord two thousand and eighteen and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-second.