

1 Introduced by Council Members Johnson, Lahnen, Carlucci, Peluso,
2 Salem, J. Carlucci, White, Gaffney Jr., Howland, Pittman, Arias,
3 Freeman, Carrico, and Boylan:
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6 **RESOLUTION 2026-194**

7 A RESOLUTION HONORING AND COMMENDING DARNELL
8 SMITH, SR., FOR HIS MORE THAN THREE DECADES OF
9 TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP IN HEALTH CARE, CIVIC
10 ENGAGEMENT, MENTORSHIP, AND FAMILY DEVOTION IN
11 JACKSONVILLE AND ACROSS NORTH FLORIDA,
12 RECOGNIZING HIS SERVICE AS NORTH FLORIDA MARKET
13 PRESIDENT FOR FLORIDA BLUE AND HIS TENURE AS
14 CHIEF OF STAFF TO MAYOR DONNA DEEGAN AS AN
15 EXECUTIVE ON LOAN, AND CELEBRATING HIS LEGACY OF
16 SERVICE, FRATERNAL COMMITMENT, AND COMMUNITY
17 IMPACT; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.
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19 **WHEREAS**, Darnell Smith, Sr., has devoted more than thirty six
20 years of distinguished leadership to Florida's health care landscape
21 through his work with Florida Blue, culminating in his role as North
22 Florida Market President overseeing operations from Palm Coast to
23 Pensacola, ensuring access to quality, affordable health care for the
24 wellbeing of families, seniors, employers, and communities across the
25 First Coast and beyond; and

26 **WHEREAS**, under Mr. Smith's steady stewardship, Florida Blue
27 strengthened its position as a trusted partner in community health,
28 business innovation, and regional economic development, reinforcing
29 the belief that health care should not only be clinically excellent,
30 but accessible, equitable, and rooted in authentic partnership; and

31 **WHEREAS**, in 2023, Darnell Smith, Sr., answered the call to public

1 service by serving as Chief of Staff to Mayor Donna Deegan as an
2 executive on loan from Florida Blue, exemplifying the highest ideals
3 of public-private collaboration and ensuring operational continuity,
4 strategic alignment, and stability within the Mayor's Office during
5 a pivotal season in Jacksonville's growth; and

6 **WHEREAS**, throughout his career, Mr. Smith has embodied the
7 principle that corporate leadership and community compassion are
8 inseparable, serving on and supporting numerous boards and
9 initiatives including Sulzbacher, Cathedral Arts Project, First Coast
10 YMCA, LIFT JAX, JAX Chamber, JAXUSA Policy Council, United Way of
11 Northeast Florida, Feeding Northeast Florida, the A. L. Lewis Black
12 Opportunity and Impact Fund, Blue Zones Jacksonville, and the youth
13 advocacy organization JASMYN, where he has been a visible and
14 courageous champion for dignity, acceptance, and opportunity; and

15 **WHEREAS**, Mr. Smith's advocacy for young people reflects his
16 conviction that every child deserves a safe space to grow, to learn,
17 and to be affirmed, and his philanthropic leadership has strengthened
18 Jacksonville's social infrastructure by investing in youth programs
19 that nurture emotional wellbeing, educational attainment, and long
20 term stability; and

21 **WHEREAS**, a proud graduate of Florida State University with a
22 Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering, Mr. Smith's
23 journey from student athlete who once struggled with mathematics to
24 accomplished executive stands as a testament to the transformative
25 power of mentorship, including the influence of legendary leader Al
26 Washington, whose belief in his promise helped launch one of Northeast
27 Florida's most respected careers in health care leadership; and

28 **WHEREAS**, in turn, Darnell Smith, Sr., has mentored countless
29 emerging leaders, young professionals, and senior executives across
30 industries, becoming a trusted advisor and steady voice of wisdom,
31 modeling the truth that leadership is measured not only by personal

1 success, but by how many others rise because of one's investment in
2 them; and

3 **WHEREAS**, beyond the boardrooms and civic chambers, Darnell
4 Smith, Sr., is first and foremost a devoted family man, the loving
5 husband of Celestine Smith, the proud father of Darnell Smith, Jr.,
6 Jordyn Smith, and Monet Smith Forney, the youngest of three siblings
7 with his older brother David and his beloved sister Rose, now
8 deceased, and his life's work reflects gratitude for the foundation
9 laid by family and a steadfast commitment to passing that blessing
10 forward; and

11 **WHEREAS**, as a committed member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity,
12 Inc., Mr. Smith has upheld a legacy of scholarship, leadership,
13 advocacy, and service, aligning his professional excellence with
14 fraternal ideals that call men to be servants of all; and

15 **WHEREAS**, Mr. Smith's leadership within Florida Blue positioned
16 Northeast Florida as a model for community-based health innovation,
17 reinforcing that the future of health care lies in prevention,
18 partnership, mentorship, and a relentless focus on improving outcomes
19 for people everywhere; and

20 **WHEREAS**, Mr. Smith's retirement from Florida Blue in the summer
21 of 2026 marks not an ending, but the culmination of a remarkable
22 chapter defined by integrity, excellence, humility, and visionary
23 leadership that has shaped Jacksonville's civic, business, and health
24 care communities for more than three decades, while his commitment
25 to giving back to this community continues unabated; now therefore

26 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City of Jacksonville:

27 **Section 1.** The City Council hereby honors and commends
28 Darnell Smith, Sr., for his extraordinary contributions to the health,
29 economic vitality, and civic strength of Jacksonville and North
30 Florida, recognizing his legacy as a transformative industry leader,
31 mentor, philanthropist, and devoted family man. The City Council

1 expresses its deep appreciation for his innovative service as Chief
2 of Staff to Mayor Donna Deegan, reflecting the highest ideals of
3 cross sector collaboration and servant leadership, and celebrates his
4 enduring impact as a champion for inclusive opportunity and accessible
5 health care, his influence will continue to shape this community for
6 generations to come.

7 **Section 2. Effective Date.** This Resolution shall become
8 effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective
9 without the Mayor's signature.

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11 Form Approved:

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13 /s/ Shannon MacGillis

14 Office of General Counsel

15 Legislation Prepared By: Colleen Hampsey, City Council Research

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