

1 Introduced by Council Members Johnson, Lahnen, Carlucci, Peluso,
2 Salem, J. Carlucci, White, Gaffney Jr., Howland, Pittman, Arias,
3 Freeman, Carrico, and Boylan and Co-Sponsored by Council Members
4 Amaro, Clark-Murray, Diamond, Gay and Miller and amended on the Floor
5 of Council:
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8 **RESOLUTION 2026-194-A**

9 A RESOLUTION HONORING AND COMMENDING DARNELL
10 SMITH, SR., FOR HIS MORE THAN THREE DECADES OF
11 TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP IN HEALTH CARE, CIVIC
12 ENGAGEMENT, MENTORSHIP, AND FAMILY DEVOTION IN
13 JACKSONVILLE AND ACROSS NORTH FLORIDA,
14 RECOGNIZING HIS SERVICE AS NORTH FLORIDA MARKET
15 PRESIDENT FOR FLORIDA BLUE AND HIS TENURE AS
16 CHIEF OF STAFF TO MAYOR DONNA DEEGAN AS AN
17 EXECUTIVE ON LOAN, AND CELEBRATING HIS LEGACY OF
18 SERVICE, FRATERNAL COMMITMENT, AND COMMUNITY
19 IMPACT; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.
20

21 **WHEREAS**, Darnell Smith, Sr., has devoted more than thirty six
22 years of distinguished leadership to Florida's health care landscape
23 through his work with Florida Blue, culminating in his role as North
24 Florida Market President overseeing operations from Palm Coast to
25 Pensacola, ensuring access to quality, affordable health care for the
26 wellbeing of families, seniors, employers, and communities across the
27 First Coast and beyond; and

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

1 but accessible, equitable, and rooted in authentic partnership; and

2 **WHEREAS**, in 2023, Darnell Smith, Sr., answered the call to public
3 service by serving as Chief of Staff to Mayor Donna Deegan as an
4 executive on loan from Florida Blue, exemplifying the highest ideals
5 of public-private collaboration and ensuring operational continuity,
6 strategic alignment, and stability within the Mayor's Office during
7 a pivotal season in Jacksonville's growth; and

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

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

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

30 **WHEREAS**, in turn, Darnell Smith, Sr., has mentored countless
31 emerging leaders, young professionals, and senior executives across

1 industries, becoming a trusted advisor and steady voice of wisdom,
2 modeling the truth that leadership is measured not only by personal
3 success, but by how many others rise because of one's investment in
4 them; and

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

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

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

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

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

29 **Section 1.** The City Council hereby honors and commends
30 Darnell Smith, Sr., for his extraordinary contributions to the health,
31 economic vitality, and civic strength of Jacksonville and North

1 Florida, recognizing his legacy as a transformative industry leader,
2 mentor, philanthropist, and devoted family man. The City Council
3 expresses its deep appreciation for his innovative service as Chief
4 of Staff to Mayor Donna Deegan, reflecting the highest ideals of
5 cross sector collaboration and servant leadership, and celebrates his
6 enduring impact as a champion for inclusive opportunity and accessible
7 health care, his influence will continue to shape this community for
8 generations to come.

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

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13 Form Approved:

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15 /s/ Mary E. Staffopoulos

16 Office of General Counsel

17 Legislation Prepared By: Colleen Hampsey, City Council Research

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