

1 discrimination and other challenges, its reputation steadily grew over the years, and by the late
2 1980s the nightclub and its revue were woven into the fabric of Portland; and

3 Whereas a night at the Darcelle XV Showplace featured campy musical productions
4 choreographed by Neuhardt, with Walter Cole appearing in an array of glamorous gowns he de-
5 signed and sewed himself, singing numbers in his distinctive deep, gravelly voice; and

6 Whereas another signature feature of the act was Darcelle XV's warm and personal interactions
7 with members of the audience and witty putdowns of occasional hecklers; and

8 Whereas long before drag became mainstream entertainment, Walter Cole was a mentor and role
9 model to countless local and national drag performers, helping to launch many careers; and

10 Whereas the Darcelle XV Showplace is believed to be the oldest operating drag club west of the
11 Mississippi River; and

12 Whereas tens of thousands of people have visited the Darcelle XV Showplace over the years and
13 enjoyed the show: young, old, men, women, gay, lesbian, straight and transgender; and

14 Whereas Walter Cole was a fearless advocate for the LGBTQ+ community, relentlessly fighting
15 discrimination and championing civil rights for all; and

16 Whereas Walter Cole was deeply committed to numerous charities, giving tirelessly of his time
17 and energy to organizations such as the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court, Cascade AIDS Project, Our
18 House of Portland, Esther's Pantry and Camp Starlight; and

19 Whereas for 30 years, Walter Cole's nightclub hosted free Christmas Eve banquets for anyone
20 in need, some years serving more than 300 people; and

21 Whereas as Darcelle XV, Walter Cole became an unofficial ambassador of goodwill for Portland,
22 appearing in numerous Portland Rose Festivals and Portland Pride Parades as well as at many other
23 civic events and fundraisers; and

24 Whereas in 2003, Walter Cole received the Spirit of Portland Award in recognition of his char-
25 itable work related to HIV/AIDS, and in 2017 the Darcelle XV AIDS Memorial honoring Oregonians
26 who have died from AIDS was unveiled at Lincoln Memorial Park in Portland; and

27 Whereas in 2019, Walter Cole was awarded an honorary knighthood by the Royal Rosarians in
28 recognition of his decades of contributions to Portland civic life; and

29 Whereas later that year, the Oregon Historical Society held a exhibit titled "The Many Shades
30 of Being Darcelle: 52 Years of Fashion," featuring some of the more than 1,500 costumes Walter
31 Cole designed during his career; and

32 Whereas in 2020, both Walter Cole's Northeast Portland home and his Old Town nightclub were
33 added to the National Register of Historic Places; and

34 Whereas Walter Cole passed away on March 23, 2023; and

35 Whereas Walter Cole was preceded in death by his life partner, Roxy Neuhardt, and he is sur-
36 vived by his wife, son, daughter, two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren; and

37 Whereas Walter Cole was part of Portland's heart and soul, and he made a unique and lasting
38 contribution to the city he called home for more than 90 years; now, therefore,

39 **Be It Resolved by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon:**

40 That we, the members of the Eighty-second Legislative Assembly, recognize and honor the re-
41 markable life of Walter Willard Cole Sr. (aka Darcelle XV), and we commend his lifetime of service
42 and dedication to making the City of Portland and the State of Oregon better and more tolerant
43 places for all of us; and be it further

44 Resolved, That a copy of this resolution shall be presented to the family of Walter Cole as an
45 expression of our sympathy and condolences.

