

CHAPTER 13

AN ACT designating a portion of State Highway Route No. 21 as the “Roberto Clemente Memorial Highway.”

WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente-Walker was born on August 18, 1934, in Carolina, Puerto Rico; and

WHEREAS, For 18 seasons, from 1955 through 1972, Roberto Clemente played Major League Baseball and wore the number 21 for the Pittsburgh Pirates, where he excelled as a baseball player and as a humanitarian; and

WHEREAS, Clemente’s accomplishments as a major league baseball player include: collecting 3,000 hits, winning four National League batting titles, a .317 lifetime batting average, and 12 Gold Glove awards, making him one of the greatest right fielders of all time; and

WHEREAS, During his celebrated career, Roberto Clemente confronted and overcame the dual obstacles of racism and language to become the first Afro-Latino to achieve unquestioned superstar status as a Major League Baseball player; and

WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente was the acknowledged leader on the field of the 1971 World Champion Pittsburgh Pirates and was voted the Most Valuable Player of the 1971 World Series, but made history by addressing a national television audience in Spanish during the clubhouse celebration; and

WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente became a role model for all players, particularly for Latinos who played with him and against him, and for succeeding generations of players and fans of the sport; and

WHEREAS, Following the 1972 baseball season, Roberto Clemente organized a relief effort designed to provide emergency assistance to the victims of a Nicaraguan earthquake; and

WHEREAS, In order to ensure that essential supplies reached the Nicaraguan victims, Roberto Clemente decided to fly as a passenger on the cargo plane; and

WHEREAS, On December 31, 1972, the cargo plane carrying Roberto Clemente crashed into the sea and all on board perished; and

WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1973, becoming only the second player for whom the five-year mandatory waiting period was waived; and

WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente’s life and death were heroic as demonstrated by his concern for others, his courage in the face of danger, and the nobility and pride with which he carried himself; and

WHEREAS, In the forty years since his death, Roberto Clemente’s memory is revered and appreciated, even by those who never had the privilege of watching him play and know little about the game of baseball; and

WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente’s career and life were marked by unselfish caring, compassion, and a willingness to give of himself, thus, it is fitting and proper for the Legislature of the State of the New Jersey to honor the memory of Roberto Clemente for his many contributions on and off the baseball field by designating a portion of State Highway Route No. 21 as the “Roberto Clemente Memorial Highway;” now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. The Commissioner of Transportation shall designate the portion of State Highway Route No. 21, extending from milepost 3.90 to milepost 5.83 as the “Roberto Clemente Memorial Highway” and erect appropriate signs bearing this designation and dedication.

2. No State or other public funds shall be used for producing, purchasing, or erecting signs bearing the designation established pursuant to section 1 of this act. The Commissioner

of Transportation is authorized to receive gifts, grants, or other financial assistance from private sources for the purpose of funding or reimbursing the Department of Transportation for the costs associated with producing, purchasing, and erecting signs bearing the designation established pursuant to section 1 of this act and entering into agreements related thereto, with private sources, including but not limited to non-governmental non-profit, education, or charitable entities or institutions. No work shall proceed, and no funding shall be accepted by the Department of Transportation until an agreement has been reached with a responsible party for paying the costs associated with producing, purchasing, erecting, and maintaining the signs.

3. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved June 30, 2016.