

P R O C L A M A T I O N

WHEREAS, the Academy of American poets established the month of April as National Poetry Month in 1996 to seek to highlight the extraordinary legacy and ongoing achievements of American poets, to introduce Americans to the pleasures and benefits of reading poetry, to bring poets and poetry to the public in immediate and innovative ways, and to make poetry an important part of our children's education; and

WHEREAS, in 2006, the City of Alexandria established its Poet Laureate program to publicly confirm the value of the literary arts and their role in enhancing the quality of life in Alexandria; and

WHEREAS, past Alexandria Poet Laureates include Mary McElveen, Amy Young, Tori Lane Kovarik, Ryan Wojanowski, and Wendi R. Kaplan; and

WHEREAS, KaNikki Jakarta was appointed as the first African American to serve as Alexandria's Poet Laureate in 2016; and during her tenure she wrote over 25 original poems for both in-person and virtual events, such as the USA/Alexandria Birthday Celebrations, and Alexandria's Earth Day Celebration; she has also written to commemorate the Contrabands and Freedman Cemetery Memorial, and poems in memoriam for the lynching of Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas; she has also heralded various community events, including the 20th Year Birthday Celebration of Charles E. Beatley Central Library in 2021, and the Northern Virginia Urban League Guild's 25th Anniversary; and

WHEREAS, KaNikki Jakarta's numerous outreach activities; she has served as a poetry judge for Alexandria Public School Youth Poetry Contest and for the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Center. Both these efforts and activities helped encourage young people in Alexandria to celebrate poetry; and

WHEREAS, KaNikki Jakarta responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by developing a series of varied virtual poetry workshops and online events, including live and streaming interviews live on several online platforms; and

WHEREAS, her works have gathered acclaim as well, as she has been featured on NBC 4 "Together We Rise," Black History Segment 2022; and WUSA9 presenting an original Poem entitled "Free-ish" at the height of the Black Lives Matter Movement in 2020 and won the Hip Hop Caucasus/Poetry Verses Hip Hop #RespectMyVote Campaign and the DC, Maryland, and Virginia Renaissance Female OG (Mentor) Of The Year 2021; and

WHEREAS, KaNikki Jakarta's term as Poet Laureate for the City of Alexandria expires on April 30, 2022.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JUSTIN M. WILSON, Mayor of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, and on behalf of the Alexandria City Council, do hereby declare April 2022 as:

"POETRY MONTH IN ALEXANDRIA"

While acknowledging, with sincere appreciation, the contributions of KaNikki Jakarta and thank her on behalf of the citizens of Alexandria for promoting poetry and the literary arts in our City, and for making poetry part of the fabric of life in the City of Alexandria.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Alexandria to be affixed this 5th day of April 2022.

MAYOR JUSTIN M. WILSON

On behalf of the City Council
of Alexandria, Virginia

ATTEST:

Gloria A. Sitton, CMC City Clerk