## RECOGNIZING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF SEPI SAIDI

### HON. DEBORAH K. ROSS

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 3, 2025*

Ms. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of my dear friend, Sepi Saidi, who passed away on March 24, 2025. Sepi was a trailblazer and beloved member of the Wake County community who nurtured her company from the ground-up in a male-dominated field. Her contributions to our community will live on for years to come in her children, friends. and the many members of our community she touched throughout her life.

Born on October 10, 1962, Sepi spent the first 15 years of her life in Tehran, Iran, where she was raised in a household with both a college-educated mother and grandmother. She moved to Raleigh as a high school transfer student in 1978 as the Iranian Revolution was unfolding in her home country, graduating from North Carolina State University with degrees in Civil & Agricultural Engineering. Sepi embraced opportunity, leaving a position at the North Carolina Department of Transportation in 2001 to found SEPI Engineering and Construction with a home equity loan, three employees, and two contracts. Within two decades, she grew SEPI Engineering and Construction to employ 300 workers and $40 million in revenue, becoming one of the top 500 private engineering firms in the country.

Sepi was well-known as an energetic, innovative leader in the Triangle, Beyond the success of SEPI Engineering and Construction, she held leadership positions at several important nonprofits and government organizations. Her wisdom and insights were valued at the Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority and the North Carolina Chamber of Commerce, earning her recognition as a Top Entrepreneur, Career Woman of the Year, and Top CEO. She was inducted into the North Carolina Business Hall of Fame in 2016 and the North Carolina Women Business Owners Hall of Fame in 2022.

However, more than any of these prestigious accolades, Sepi will be remembered for living life with intention and compassion. She always took the time to learn everything she could about her employees and was a conscientious friend and mentor to many who aspired to follow in her footsteps. She was also a fierce advocate for women's equality in the workplace and in society. She credited her mother and grandmother for encouraging her and her sister to pursue an education and pursue careers they could be passionate about.

I have known Sepi for more than 20 years, both personally and professionally. We collaborated on transportation, immigration, and women's issues. Together, we tried our best to make North Carolina a more prosperous and welcoming place. I will miss her as a dear friend and as an inspiring leader. Her son, Bardia, has been a valuable and trusted member of my team since I first ran for Congress. Every day, I see that he embodies her spirit, determination, and grace.

Sepi was an extraordinary woman who lived a remarkable life, and I will always be grateful that I had the immense privilege of knowing her. She was a devoted mother, compassionate friend, visionary thinker, and dear friend. She will be forever missed by her children Nakisa Asefnia and Bardia Asefnia, her siblings Sofey Saidi and Taher Saidi, and her many friends and colleagues. She left an immeasurable mark on our community, and her legacy will live on for generations to come.

## CELEBRATING GURUDEV SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

### HON. TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 3, 2025*

Mr. KENNEDY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, a globally revered spiritual and humanitarian leader who has spearheaded an unprecedented worldwide movement for a stress-free, violence-free society. Through his organizations, including the Art of Living and the International Association for Human Values, Gurudev Shankar has impacted an estimated 800 million people across 180 countries. His programs have empowered individuals to tackle challenges at the global, national, community, and individual levels.

Gurudev Shankar was born in 1956 in Southern India, where he demonstrated his spiritual and intellectual gifts at an early age. By the age of four, Gurudev Shankar was reciting the Bhagavad Gita and meditating. In 1982, during a ten-day period of silence, Gurudev Shankar developed Sudarshan Kriya, a powerful breathing technique that became central to the Art of Living courses, offering stress relief and well-being to millions.

Gurudev Shankar founded The Art of Living as an international non-profit organization dedicated to fostering peace and human values. He also established the International Association for Human Values to support sustainable development and conflict resolution worldwide. His programs have made significant impacts in conflict zones such as Kashmir, Colombia, and Iraq, and have provided trauma relief for war veterans and communities affected by violence.

In addition to his global peace efforts, Gurudev Shankar is committed to education and environmental conservation. His initiatives have led to the creation of over 1,300 schools providing free education to underserved children in India, and his organization has planted over 100 million trees across the globe. Furthermore, The Art of Living's prison program has reached over 800,000 prisoners, helping to rehabilitate and reintegrate them into society.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar as he visits Western New York to lead "The Journey Within," an evening of meditation and wisdom offering a unique opportunity for attendees to experience his transformative teachings firsthand. His lifelong commitment to peace, education, and humanitarian work continues to inspire millions worldwide, and we are all the better for it.