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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – September 30, 2025

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) announced that on September 27, 2025, John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM, AACCNJ, Founder, President & CEO, received an honorary doctor of humane letters degree from Thomas Edison State University.

Trenton, NJ – September 30, 2025. The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) announced that on Saturday, September 27, 2025, John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM, AACCNJ, Founder, President & CEO, was bestowed with an honorary doctor of humane letters degree, from Thomas Edison State University (TESU) at the CURE Arena in Trenton, NJ. The TESU commencement, class of 2025 included 661 graduates from New Jersey and 1,091 from across the U.S. and 24 other countries. The accomplishments of 29 doctoral students with the following backgrounds: 1 Asian, 9 Black/African American, 4 Hispanic, 12 white, 2 unknown, 1 two or more races, were celebrated.

“It’s a tremendous honor when a university gives you an honorary degree and asks you to speak at its graduation ceremonies,” said John E. Harmon, Sr. “As the only one, out of seven siblings, in my family to graduate from college, I take great pride in receiving this honorary degree from Thomas Edison State University, where 9 of the 29 Doctoral Degree recipients from the 2025 commencement class were African American”, said Harmon.

“Thomas Edison State University has a long-standing tradition of honoring individuals who have demonstrated exceptional leadership and made transformative contributions to the business and economic landscape. Your remarkable achievements in fostering economic empowerment, particularly through your visionary leadership as the Founder, President, and CEO of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ), have had a profound and lasting impact on not only the City of Trenton and the State of New Jersey but abroad.

Since 2007, you have tirelessly championed the growth and success of African American businesses, establishing the AACCNJ as a vital force for economic development. Your influence extends far beyond New Jersey, evidenced by your leadership roles on the National Black Chamber of Commerce, the US Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia’s Economic Community Advisory Council, and numerous other prestigious boards, including Investors Bank and Hackensack Meridian Health.

In selecting recipients for this distinguished honor, we seek to recognize individuals who embody our values of innovation, perseverance, and leadership.” **Merodie A. Hancock, Ph.D., President, Thomas Edison State University.**

John, the conferral of an honorary degree by an accredited college or university represents one of the highest honors an academic institution can bestow. It is granted in recognition of exceptional leadership, lifetime achievement, and distinguished contributions to society that reflect the core values and mission of higher

education.

Although not equivalent to an earned doctoral degree, the honorary doctorate signifies the enduring impact of an individual's work and their alignment with the standards of excellence upheld by the academic community.

To be awarded multiple honorary degrees—such as four—is a rare and distinguished recognition, reflecting a sustained record of excellence, influence, and service within a chosen field of endeavor. The invitation to address graduates and future scholars further affirms the role as a thought leader and torchbearer of wisdom, vision, and integrity.

Such recognition is not only a celebration of past achievements, but also a call to continued service—a testament to the transformative power of purpose, perseverance, and the lasting difference one life can make. – **Dr. Ken L. Harris, Ph.D., President & CEO, The National Business League**

John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM, ABA, BA, ABA, h.c., BS, L.H.D. h.c. holds an associate degree in Business Administration from Mercer County Community College and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Management, Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1983. Shortly before graduating in 1983, Harmon received a call from FDU's career development office encouraging him to apply for a management training program for future bank presidents. Of 150 candidates, he was one of only 12 chosen – and the only African American. Mr. Harmon also successfully completed a one-year Fellowship on Regionalism and Sustainability sponsored by The Ford Foundation and completed the Minority Business Management Seminar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in 2009. Additionally, Mr. Harmon completed a four-year Chamber Executive Management Program, at Villanova University, sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, in 2014. Harmon was conferred with an honorary associate's degree in business administration from Rowan College Burlington County, in 2014. Harmon was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters (L.H.D.), honoris causa, from Fairleigh Dickinson University in May of 2022. Harmon was bestowed with an honorary degree of Doctor of Business Administration. from Georgian Court University, Lakewood, NJ in 2024, and an honorary doctor of humane letters degree from William Paterson University in 2025, in recognition of his achievements as a public servant, his initiatives focused on African American residents and businesses in the State of New Jersey, and for his leadership.

About the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) is dedicated to economically empowering and sustaining African American communities and businesses through entrepreneurship and capitalistic initiatives throughout the state of New Jersey and through its partnership with the National Black Chamber of Commerce, Inc. AACCNJ joins the top 3% of all chambers in the U.S. that are accredited, is the only accredited chamber in New Jersey, and is the only accredited African American chamber in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Federation.

The AACCNJ performs an essential role in the economic viability of New Jersey. While providing a platform for New Jersey's African American business leaders to speak with a collective voice, the AACCNJ advocates and promotes economic diversity fostering a climate of business growth through major initiatives centering on education and public policy. The Chamber serves as a proactive advocacy group with a 501(c) 3 tax exemption, which is shared by the National Black Chamber of Commerce.