**A** **SENATE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR SUSAN WILLIAMSON DEVENNY, DIRECTOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS, ON THE OCCASION OF HER DEPARTURE FROM THE AGENCY, TO THANK HER FOR HER MANY YEARS OF OUTSTANDING AND DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OF SOUTH CAROLINA, AND TO WISH HER MUCH SUCCESS AND FULFILLMENT IN HER NEW ROLE AS PRESIDENT OF LANCASTER’S J. MARION SIMS FOUNDATION.

Whereas, for sixteen years, South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness has enjoyed the professional knowledge, skill, and experience of Susan Williamson DeVenny of Lancaster, first as a founding board member appointed by former Governor Jim Hodges and later as executive director, a post she has filled with distinction for the past twelve years; and

Whereas, First Steps, which uses state, federal, local, and private funds on health and education programs for preschool children, their families, and caregivers, has benefited greatly from the leadership of Susan DeVenny. Among other accomplishments during her tenure as executive director of First Steps, she has created and managed a state‑funded four‑year‑old kindergarten program for children attending private preschools in high‑poverty communities; launched a program in which nurses mentor first‑time, low‑income mothers in their homes; and overseen the First Steps budget as it has grown to $58.8 million from $18.4 million; and

Whereas, on December 16, 2015, having just left First Steps, Susan DeVenny became president and chief executive officer of the J. Marion Sims Foundation, a Lancaster‑based education and health wellness nonprofit organization. As the foundation’s unanimous choice, she was awarded the post after a wide‑ranging national search that reached more than two hundred candidates in nineteen states; and

Whereas, aware that she has poised First Steps to continue its valuable work into the next generation, First Steps chairman Ken Wingate appreciatively says of her, “Susan has been a strong and consistent voice for South Carolina’s youngest learners, and she leaves big shoes to fill”; and

Whereas, Susan believes strongly in personal involvement in her community, and as a woman of faith she is a committed member of Lancaster’s First Baptist Church. This graduate of Furman University and the University of Georgia is also the loving wife of Alston and proud mother of Miller, Sarah Katherine, Emma, and Mary Alston DeVenny; and

Whereas, on the occasion of her departure from First Steps, Susan’s colleagues gathered to honor this outstanding servant leader at a farewell event, held on December 14, 2015, at First Baptist Church of Columbia; and

Whereas, the Senate, grateful for the legacy of consistent commitment and excellence Susan DeVenny has bestowed on the children, families, and taxpayers of South Carolina, takes great pleasure in wishing her well as she transitions to a new leadership role as president of Lancaster’s J. Marion Sims Foundation. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate:

That the members of the South Carolina Senate, by this resolution, recognize and honor Susan Williamson DeVenny, director of South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness, on the occasion of her departure from the agency, thank her for her many years of outstanding and dedicated service to the children and families of South Carolina, and wish her much success and fulfillment in her new role as president of Lancaster’s J. Marion Sims Foundation.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Susan Williamson DeVenny.

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