**A** **SENATE RESOLUTION**

TO EXPRESS THE PROFOUND SORROW OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA SENATE UPON THE PASSING OF BARBARA THORNTON SYLVESTER AND TO EXTEND THEIR DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HER FAMILY AND MANY FRIENDS.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina Senate were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Barbara Thornton Sylvester on Wednesday, April 12, 2017 at the age of eighty-eight; and

Whereas, a lifelong resident of Florence, Barbara was active in community, state, and political affairs on the local, state, and national level. A recipient of the Order of the Palmetto, she earned a reputation as Florence’s Rosie the Riveter and a “Steel Magnolia.” Legislators knew her as a fearless activist who had no qualms about asserting herself in a male-dominated political system; and

Whereas, Barbara was one of a trio of woman “dynamos” behind the establishment of mental health programs in the State. When faced with a lack of services for her special needs daughter, April, Barbara helped fill the gap by working toward the establishment of the South Carolina Department of Mental Retardation and, subsequently, what is now the Pee Dee Center. Barbara had a generous passion for helping those in the community who could not help themselves, and her political clout was important in establishing, maintaining, and improving programs; and

Whereas, the widow of an esteemed Florence physician, Dr. Joseph G. Sylvester, who died in 1992, Barbara was an avid supporter of the Sylvester Award, given annually in her late husband’s honor to a McLeod Regional Medical Center nurse for outstanding work ethic. Barbara and her daughter, April, wanted to make a difference, especially for cancer patients, and selflessly gave from the heart in supporting the McLeod Foundation; and

Whereas, when the HIV/AIDS epidemic reached the region, Barbara was one of a small group of activists responsible for the establishment of Hope for the Pee Dee, which provided services for those fighting the disease. The groundbreaking clinic eventually grew to become HopeHealth, a major provider of comprehensive medical services in the Pee Dee, and Barbara raised tens of thousands of dollars for the organization, showing a love that radiated throughout the community; and

Whereas, also an advocate for youth, Barbara served as chairwoman of the South Carolina Board of Youth Services and the State Board of Juvenile Corrections. In 1977, President Jimmy Carter appointed her to the National Advisory Committee for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and

Whereas, Barbara was a fixture in and proud member of the South Carolina Democratic Party, through which she championed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In the 1970s, she cofounded the Florence chapter of the League of Women Voters and served on the Democratic National Committee. In 2000, Barbara cofounded a nonprofit, nonpartisan committee that raised money to support the political campaigns of South Carolina women running for office, which was named the B-List in her honor; and

Whereas, Barbara Sylvester was a spirited friend and servant to thousands of people from all walks of life: the poor, rich, young, old, black, white, powerful, weak, lonely, famous, and forgotten. She left behind accomplishments that changed lives and enriched her community and the State that she loved so much. She will be missed. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate:

That the members of the South Carolina Senate, by this resolution, express their profound sorrow upon the passing of Barbara Thornton Sylvester and extend their deepest sympathy to her family and many friends.

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