**A** **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**

TO HONOR BESSIE BOWMAN ABRAHAM OF ORANGEBURG COUNTY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE ORANGEBURG AREA MENTAL HEALTH CENTER, ON THE OCCASION OF HER RETIREMENT, THANK HER FOR HER THIRTY‑THREE YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH CAROLINA, AND WISH HER CONTINUED SUCCESS AND HAPPINESS IN ALL HER FUTURE ENDEAVORS.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina General Assembly have learned that Bessie Bowman Abraham of Orangeburg County will begin a well‑deserved retirement at the end of March 2012 after thirty‑three years of outstanding service to the citizens of the Palmetto State; and

Whereas, in preparation for her life’s work, Bessie Bowman Abraham graduated from South Carolina State University with a bachelor’s degree in sociology, followed by a master’s of social work earned at the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania; and

Whereas, a native of Rowesville, she worked as director of children’s services for agencies in Pittsburgh and Detroit, Michigan, before returning to her home community, where she has been employed by the South Carolina Department of Mental Health at the Orangeburg Area Mental Health Center for thirty‑three years; and

Whereas, beginning at the center as director of children’s services in 1978, she rose through the ranks to clinical director, assistant director, and, in 2002, executive director. In this latter capacity, she has been responsible for the provision of public mental health services to a quarter‑million citizens in a three‑county area and for the management of a staff numbering as many as 138; and

Whereas, under her leadership, the center has consistently achieved the highest level of accreditation and has prospered in its mission because of her positive management style and commitment to the recovery and community functioning of her patients‑‑this, despite a decade of increasing financial pressure for public mental health programs across the United States; and

Whereas, twice voted Orangeburg Area Mental Health Center Outstanding Employee of the Year, Mrs. Abraham is widely valued as a role model and mentor to today’s young mental health professionals; and

Whereas, her dedication does not stop with her work at the center. She is a member of the Mt. Olive Corporation and board president for Abraham‑Moss, a nonprofit community group that secured more than one million dollars in funding to build senior housing in her area. Among other worthy organizations she serves, she is financial secretary for the South Carolina Congress of Christian Education; and

Whereas, a woman of faith, Mrs. Abraham is a member of Hickory Grove Baptist Church, where she serves in multiple capacities, including Sunday School superintendent, Bible study and Sunday School teacher, and financial secretary; and

Whereas, for her work with the Girl Scouts, she has been named a Woman of Distinction and on April 19, 2012, will be honored as such at a special ceremony in Florence. Among her numerous other honors, she was granted the 2007 University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work Distinguished Alumni Award; and

Whereas, Mrs. Abraham is the proud mother of two children, Sinclair Reginald Abraham, Jr., and Stephanie Abraham Robinson, as well as the delighted grandmother of Bryson Sinclair Abraham Robinson, named after his grandfather; and

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly is grateful for the legacy of consistent commitment and excellence in service that Bessie Bowman Abraham has bestowed on the people of South Carolina. The members take great pleasure in wishing her well as she enters retirement and trust she will find much enjoyment in the more leisurely pace of the days ahead. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate, the House of Representatives concurring:

That the members of the South Carolina General Assembly, by this resolution, honor Bessie Bowman Abraham of Orangeburg County, executive director of the Orangeburg Area Mental Health Center, on the occasion of her retirement, thank her for her thirty‑three years of service to the people of South Carolina, and wish her continued success and happiness in all her future endeavors.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be provided to Bessie Bowman Abraham.

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