**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 1‑1‑691 SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT THE SCHMOONEY, THE MAIN CHARACTER IN “THE SCHMOONEY TRILOGIES”, IS DESIGNATED AS THE OFFICIAL MASCOT FOR LITERACY FOR SOUTH CAROLINA.

Whereas, South Carolina has a statewide adult illiteracy rate of approximately 14.7 percent, with individual county rates ranging from 29 percent to 10.25 percent; and

Whereas, the Palmetto State has made progress in its fight against illiteracy in recent years and, as a result, the percentage of South Carolina adults who lack basic literacy skills shrank by one‑fourth between 1992 and 2003. The percentage of Palmetto State adults unable to read and understand written information in English improved from 20 percent to 15 percent during this period; and

Whereas, a literate population is critical for developing an educated workforce and strengthening the State’s economy; and

Whereas, promoting literacy not only serves the State, but also potentially may impact and improve the quality of life for those who are held back personally and economically due to illiteracy; and

Whereas, helping develop strong reading skills and instilling a love of reading at an early age helps provide children with a strong foundation for success in school and in life; and

Whereas, the Schmooney, a creature made up of seven different animals, is not only a storybook hero, but also a soft cuddly stuffed animal that is fast becoming an endearing symbol that entices children to read; and

Whereas, the Schmooney and its associated programs help increase children’s interest in reading, improve vocabulary and social interaction skills, and increase knowledge of nature and civic responsibilities in the youth of this State. Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Article 9, Chapter 1, Title 1 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 1‑1‑691. The Schmooney, the main character in ‘The Schmooney Trilogies’, is designated as the official mascot for literacy in South Carolina.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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