**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO CONGRATULATE ST. HELENA ISLAND’S PENN CENTER ON THE OCCASION OF ITS ONE HUNDRED FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY, TO THANK THE CENTER FOR ITS OUTSTANDING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PEOPLE OF THE PALMETTO STATE, AND TO EXTEND BEST WISHES FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS IN THE YEARS AHEAD.

Whereas, the South Carolina House of Representatives notes with pleasure that St. Helena Island’s Penn Center is celebrating its one hundred fiftieth anniversary this year; and

Whereas, located on St. Helena Island, one of the most beautiful and historically distinct of the South Carolina Sea Islands, Penn Center sits at the heart of Gullah culture on the fifty acres of the historical campus of Penn School. A National Historic Landmark since 1974, it is a part of the Penn School Historic District, which is comprised of a number of buildings and areas related to, and used by, Penn School: Brick Church; Darrah Hall, one of the oldest buildings on St. Helena Island; old burial grounds; Gantt Cottage, where Martin Luther King, Jr., lodged; a nature trail; Chowan Creek; and acres of pines and native flora and fauna; and

Whereas, Penn Center began in 1862 as Penn School, an experimental program to educate Sea Island slaves freed at the beginning of the Civil War. The school’s first principals were Northern missionaries Laura Towne and Ellen Murray. Both spent the next forty years of their lives living among and educating former Sea Island slaves, the Gullah people of the South Carolina Lowcountry; and

Whereas, by 1900, the name changed to Penn Normal, Industrial, and Agricultural School. Providing teacher training, as well as training in wheelwrighting, carpentry, cobbling, blacksmithing, and the agricultural sciences, Penn educated students from neighboring Sea Island communities throughout South Carolina. When the school closed in 1948, it became Penn Community Services Center; and

Whereas, during the 1960s, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference chose Penn as a training site for retreat and strategic planning. Today, Penn Center’s mission is to preserve the unique history, culture, and environment of the Sea Islands through serving as a local, national, and international resource center and by acting as a catalyst for the development of programs for self‑sufficiency; and

Whereas, to carry out its mission, Penn Center sponsors numerous public programs, such as the History and Culture Program, Annual Penn Center Heritage Days Celebration, York W. Bailey Museum, Laura M. Towne Archives and Library, Program for Academic and Cultural Enrichment, Early Intervention Program, Land Use and Environmental Education Program, and Conference Center; and

Whereas, grateful for the center’s century and a half of providing both education and pleasure to the people of South Carolina, the House of Representatives is pleased to honor Penn Center on its one hundred fiftieth anniversary and encourages all South Carolinians to continue supporting and enjoying its offerings. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, congratulate St. Helena Island’s Penn Center on the occasion of its one hundred fiftieth anniversary, thank the center for its outstanding educational and cultural contributions to the people of the Palmetto State, and extend best wishes for continued success in the years ahead.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be provided to Penn Center.

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