**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO REMEMBER AND CELEBRATE THE LIFE OF THE HONORABLE ALFRED RUSH, MEMBER OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES (1868‑1870, 1874‑1876) AND PIONEER IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FREE PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR ALL IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

Whereas, it is right and proper to give honor to whom honor is due, and the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives are pleased to recall and celebrate the life of their nineteenth‑century colleague the Honorable Alfred Rush, a pioneer in the establishment of free public education for all in the Palmetto State; and

Whereas, though his birthday is not known precisely, Alfred Rush was born a slave to the Gee family in the Ebenezer area of what at the time was considered Darlington County. John Gee, one of the first magistrates of Darlington, had settled fourteen hundred acres of land in Darlington with his first homestead, located near present‑day Five Points, in 1811; and

Whereas, Alfred Rush attended Ebenezer Baptist Church as he was a slave of Mr. Gee. There Mr. Rush taught and ministered to the slave congregation as a slave deacon and, in 1866, was granted a letter of dismissal to join the black church in Darlington; and

Whereas, Alfred Rush became a farmer, a blacksmith, and a gin and mill operator on the Gee plantation, and as a trusted manservant to John Gee’s son, Edmund Gee, the young Alfred obtained a rare slave skill: He could read; and

Whereas, Edmund Gee, a well‑regarded attorney in the village of Darlington, which he served in the South Carolina House of Representatives from 1826 to 1828, would bring Alfred with him to Columbia, likely planting seeds that eventually would inspire Mr. Rush to take on the same legislative role himself; and

Whereas, after the Civil War, in 1867 the U.S. Congress passed the Reconstruction Acts, and newly freed African Americans gained voting rights, enabling literate former slaves like Alfred Rush to be elected to the state’s forty‑eighth General Assembly, with African Americans comprising the majority of legislators; and

Whereas, with the support of the Gee family and many other prominent Ebenezer families, as well as that of his church connections at Ebenezer Baptist and a black church in Darlington, Rush ran as a Republican and won a seat for the Darlington district in 1868. He would serve in that position during the 1868 to 1870 term and again from 1874 until 1876; and

Whereas, in 1868, Representative Rush and his fellow legislators opened the doors to free education for all, regardless of race, gender, or religion, when they introduced legislation creating and maintaining a free public school system in South Carolina. This same body of legislators also gave opportunity to the new freedmen and women to matriculate at the University of South Carolina at Columbia; and

Whereas, Mr. Rush paid the ultimate sacrifice for his contributions when he was assassinated in 1876; and

Whereas, to recognize Representative Rush’s invaluable contributions to public education, Florence School District 1 has named the newly opened Alfred E. Rush Academy in his honor; and

Whereas, grateful for the legacy of consistent commitment and excellence Alfred Rush bestowed on South Carolina, as well as for his pioneering spirit, the members of the House take great pleasure in saluting him as a great benefactor whose influence on every citizen of this great State remains even to the present day. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, remember and celebrate the life of the Honorable Alfred Rush, member of the South Carolina House of Representatives (1868‑1870, 1874‑1876) and pioneer in the establishment of free public education for all in South Carolina.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be provided to the family of Alfred Rush.

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