**A** **JOINT RESOLUTION**

TO DIRECT THE STATE HOUSE COMMITTEE TO COMMISSION A PORTRAIT OF THE LATE ELIZABETH EVELYN WRIGHT MENAFEE, A NOTED HUMANITARIAN, EDUCATOR, AND FOUNDER OF VOORHEES COLLEGE TO BE PLACED IN AN APPROPRIATE PLACE IN THE STATE HOUSE.

Whereas, born on April 3, 1872 in Talbotton, Georgia, Elizabeth Evelyn Wright Menafee was the seventh child of John and Virginia Wright and was educated in the basement of St. Phillips AME Church before continuing her education at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama; and

Whereas, her work ethic, mental strength, and determination caught the attention of Booker T. Washington and his wife Olivia, who became her mentors and encouraged her to dedicate herself to the education of young African Americans; and

Whereas, after an illness forced her to drop out of Tuskegee during her senior year, she accepted a teaching position at a school in McNeill, South Carolina. Unfortunately, she was only there for six months before the school was burned to the ground in an act of arson; and

Whereas, after returning to Tuskegee and completing her degree, Elizabeth returned to McNeill and opened another school for African American children in the area. Although two acts of arson destroyed the school, Elizabeth was not dissuaded from pursuing her dream of educating poor black children; and

Whereas, despite being penniless, Elizabeth was able to open the Denmark Industrial School on April 14, 1897 to fourteen students in the second floor of a two‑story general store; and

Whereas, after enrollment swelled to 270 students, the Washingtons sent Martin Menafee to help Elizabeth raise money for a more permanent school. Martin was able to meet with Ralph Voorhees, who enabled the school to purchase land for a new structure. The school was renamed Voorhees Industrial School and was incorporated by the South Carolina General Assembly in 1904; and

Whereas, Elizabeth and Martin Menafee were married on June 2, 1906 on the campus of Voorhees Industrial School; and

Whereas, although illness claimed her life at the young age of 34, Elizabeth was able to fulfil her lifelong mission of trying to help her fellow man to help themselves and overcoming the immense challenges that attempted to prevent her from educating African Americans in South Carolina; and

Whereas, the General Assembly is grateful for the legacy that Elizabeth Evelyn Wright Menafee has given to the Palmetto State and for the lasting impact she made in educating the underserved in this State, and believe that a portrait of her to be placed in the State House is a fitting tribute to this distinguished South Carolinian. Now, therefore,

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

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the State House Committee shall commission a portrait of the late Elizabeth Evelyn Wright Menafee, a noted humanitarian, educator, and founder of Voorhees College to be placed in an appropriate place in the State House in close proximity to the portrait of Mary McLeod Bethune.

SECTION 2. The committee shall handle the arrangements and details regarding the portrait including, but not limited to, an appropriate ceremony to commemorate the unveiling and dedication of the portrait. The cost of obtaining the portrait shall be paid by Voorhees College and private contributions.

SECTION 3. This joint resolution takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

‑‑‑‑XX‑‑‑‑