**A** **SENATE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR THE WESTERN YORK COUNTY NAACP FOR FOUNDING THE OLDEST PARADE TO HONOR DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., IN THE PALMETTO STATE, AND TO WISH IT EVERY SUCCESS IN MAINTAINING THIS RICH SOUTH CAROLINA TRADITION.

Whereas, the South Carolina Senate is pleased to learn that due to the initiative and hard work of the Western York County NAACP, the City of York is home to the oldest Martin Luther King, Jr., parade in the State; and

Whereas, inspired by a movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s to create a federal holiday in honor of Dr. King’s heroic call to civil disobedience during the Civil Rights Era, Mozel Neely, the late Isaac “Ike” Wright, and the late Edward Rawlinson of the Western York County NAACP founded the York MLK parade in 1981; and

Whereas, although lacking some trappings of established parades, the inaugural parade featured a trailer from Wright’s Funeral Home which boasted a picture of Dr. King. The event provided a great source of pride to parade founders and attendees who knew they were witnessing the beginning of a very special tradition; and

Whereas, the annual parade grew quickly, and today features a host of local and regional school bands, an impressive array of floats, and an enthusiastic assembly of people of all races and religions uniting in a processional down Congress Street to remember the slain civil rights icon; and

Whereas, continuously sponsored by the Western York County NAACP every year since its founding, the parade, which was never about color, continues to promote a message of equality and Dr. King’s ideal that brotherhood, love, unity, and community are reasons for celebration; and

Whereas, the parade organizers faithfully planned the parade year after year, even though South Carolina was the last state to recognize the King holiday and York County was one of the last counties in the State to designate it as a county holiday; and

Whereas, in the midst of turbulent race relations in the United States, York County’s MLK parade has showcased the best of human kindness and relationships among people in America, regardless of their backgrounds; and

Whereas, although two of the parade’s three founding members have passed, Mr. Mozel Neely, now in his eighties, remains to look with a mixture of pride and humility at how the event has flourished. In recognition of his instrumental role in starting this invaluable tradition, Mr. Neely was honored in the 2017 parade in a manner befitting one of its founding fathers; and

Whereas, the South Carolina Senate is grateful for the longstanding diligence of the Western York County NAACP in continuing the MLK parade since 1981, and wishes their members continued success as they honor the memory and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate:

That the members of the South Carolina Senate, by this resolution, recognize and honor the Western York County NAACP for founding the oldest parade to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in the Palmetto State, and to wish it every success in maintaining this rich South Carolina tradition.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to the Western York County NAACP.

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