**A** **SENATE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR LOW COUNTRY HEALTHY START (LCHS) FOR TWENTY YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE IN REDUCING DISPARITIES IN INFANT MORTALITY AND TO EXTEND BEST WISHES TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS IN ITS WORTHY ENDEAVORS.

Whereas, Low Country Healthy Start (LCHS) came into being in 1997, as a program of the South Carolina Office of Rural Health, by winning a competitive federal grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Maternal and Child Health Bureau; and

Whereas, the objective of the program was then, and remains, the reduction of disparities in infant mortality between black infants and white infants. The infant mortality rate is a measure of the number of infants born alive but who die before their first birthday. The formula is the number of infant deaths, divided by the number of live births, multiplied by one thousand; and

Whereas, LCHS serves women of reproductive age, pregnant women, mothers who have just given birth, infants, and families from birth to the child’s second birthday. LCHS involves fathers throughout and supports couples with reproductive life planning; and

Whereas, the federal Healthy Start program works only in communities with infant mortality rates at least 1.5 times the national average and high rates of low birthweight infants, preterm births, and maternal deaths; and

Whereas, LCHS has worked in Allendale, Bamberg, Hampton, and Orangeburg counties continuously for twenty years. Barnwell County pregnant women have suffered poor outcomes, as well, and were in need of service. However, federal funds were not available. With special state funding, LCHS also has served Barnwell County women, infants, and families. LCHS’s focus and tenacity have made a positive difference; and

Whereas, over the past ten years, LCHS has served over 3,700 women and 6,200 infants in such areas as using the healthcare system to their benefit; finding resources they need; getting back into school; taking care of themselves, their infants, and other family members; advocating for themselves and their families; recognizing and taking advantage of opportunities; getting training needed for better jobs; and planning their families and deciding when they want, and can care for, another child; and

Whereas, the LCHS program has provided a significant service to the region, its families, and the State. This work is a credit to the leadership of the director, the staff, and the advisory groups. In the midst of many barriers, including hospital closures in the area, as well as overall lack of access to care and income, fragmented services, crippling poverty, and other limited resources, the LCHS staff has given women hope and continues to ensure that women have the most coordinated care possible. LCHS has made great strides in preparing women and families for lifelong changes and challenges. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate:

That the members of the South Carolina Senate, by this resolution, recognize and honor Low Country Healthy Start (LCHS) for twenty years of dedicated service in reducing disparities in infant mortality and extend best wishes to the organization for continued success in its worthy endeavors.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Low Country Healthy Start.

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