**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE THE RIVERBANKS ZOO AND GARDEN, THE PREMIER ZOO ATTRACTION IN THE SOUTHEAST, TO CONGRATULATE THE FOUNDERS AND STAFF FOR FORTY‑EIGHT YEARS OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION, ANIMAL CARE AND WELFARE, EDUCATION, AND ENTERTAINMENT TO THE CITIZENS OF THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA, AND TO DECLARE MAY 4, 2022, “RIVERBANKS ZOO AND GARDEN DAY” IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

Whereas, the Riverbanks Zoo and Garden, situated on one hundred seventy acres, includes a zoo, aquarium, and botanical garden located along the Saluda River in the state’s capital city; and

Whereas, named one of America’s best zoos by Trip Advisor, the readers of USA Today, and other media outlets, the zoo is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and has provided job creation and economic development in the community that will continue well into the future; and

Whereas, operated by the Rich‑Lex Riverbanks Park Special Purpose District, a partnership of the City of Columbia and Richland and Lexington counties, the zoo is governed by the Riverbanks Park Commission with two members each from the three governments and one at‑large member; and

Whereas, in the early 1960s, Columbia‑area businessmen conceived of a zoo for the state capital, an idea which reached the planning stages in 1969, and the zoo opened on April 25, 1974, which included exhibits such as moated habitats for big cats and bears, other mammals, and various bird species; and

Whereas, Riverbanks Zoo and Garden is the Palmetto State’s largest gated attraction, averaging over one million visitors each year and is a four‑time winner of the Southeastern Tourism Society’s Shining Example Award as the Southeast’s top tourist attraction and a two‑time winner of the SC Parks Recreation and Tourism Governor’s Cup Award as South Carolina’s Leading Attraction; and

Whereas, the zoo is home to about two thousand animals representing more than 350 species, with collections of mammals, birds, reptiles, and fish. The Birdhouse at Riverbanks opened in 2001 and was given a Significant Achievement Award by the AZA as one of the best new zoo exhibits in the United States, and features a display of king, rockhopper, and gentoo penguins. In 2002, exhibits for African elephants, gorillas, and koalas were added; and

Whereas, Riverbanks also boasts a botanical garden which opened on June 10, 1995, with more than four thousand two hundred species of native and exotic plants. The botanical garden is listed on the National Register of Historic Places with a deep history rooted back to the early 1800s; and

Whereas, Waterfall Junction at Riverbanks Botanical Garden opened in April 2016 offering families and children of all ages new opportunities for nature exploration. Visitors can splash under and around a 25-foot cascading waterfall, unearth a life size replica of a T-Rex, and frolic between giant tree houses and kid-sized playhouses; and

Whereas, the South Carolina House of Representatives applauds the extraordinary success of the Riverbanks Zoo and Garden, and the members look to hear of their continued prosperity in the days ahead. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, recognize the Riverbanks Zoo and Garden, the premier zoo attraction in the Southeast, congratulate the founders and staff for forty-eight years of wildlife conservation, animal care and welfare, and entertainment to the citizens of the State of South Carolina, and declare May 4, 2022, “Riverbanks Zoo and Garden Day” in South Carolina.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Riverbanks Zoo and Garden.

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