**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO CONGRATULATE DEBBIE BELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA CHILDREN’S THEATRE, ON THE OCCASION OF HER RETIREMENT AFTER THIRTY‑FOUR YEARS OF OUTSTANDING SERVICE, AND TO WISH HER CONTINUED HAPPINESS IN ALL HER FUTURE ENDEAVORS.

Whereas, the House of Representatives has learned that Debbie Bell will begin a well‑deserved retirement in October 2022 after more than three decades as the highly‑regarded executive director of South Carolina Children’s Theatre (SCCT) in Greenville; and

Whereas, before joining the team at SCCT, Ms. Bell, a Greenville native, worked in banking, at IBM, and at Coldwell Banker Caine, her family’s company, which is still thriving today. Initially involved in SCCT as a parent volunteer, Ms. Bell became the business manager of SCCT in 1989 and was promoted to executive director in 1999, a career that has impacted generations of children and families in the Palmetto State; and

Whereas, under her leadership, SCCT has become the largest children’s theatre in the State, serving fifty thousand children and their families annually before COVID‑19 through performances, special events, theatre classes, on‑site residencies, school tours, and outreach programs for under‑resourced children. With Ms. Bell’s leadership, SCCT has been a welcoming place for all, and its MainStage productions has served communities from across South Carolina, as well as neighboring states; and

Whereas, her leadership and eye for detail have allowed SCCT to create jobs within Greenville and provide employment opportunities for visiting directors and designers who participate in the productions, and she has grown SCCT’s staff from a volunteer team of parents and a budget of fifty‑seven thousand dollars to twelve full and parttime staff members and a budget of over a million dollars with fiduciary integrity as an SCCT keystone; and

Whereas, Ms. Bell has built partnerships with organizations across the Upstate to ensure that the theatre’s most vulnerable neighbors can enjoy and benefit from the theatre’s theatrical and educational programming of SCCT’s TOPs program. In 2005, Ms. Bell and SCCT’s education team created Bully Prevention Program, taught in person in Greenville County to over a hundred thousand students in its first fifteen years before the Covid‑19 Pandemic; and

Whereas, after years of operating out of warehouses, government buildings, and then the Gunter Theatre at the Peace Center, SCCT received a patron’s bequest of her home and land in Greenville in 2010, stipulating that the organization raise funds to erect its own theatre. Ms. Bell led a team of community volunteers in a capital campaign that raised over fourteen million dollars from private and corporate donors, foundations, and governmental entities for the new state‑of‑the‑art theatre facility that opened in April 2020; and

Whereas, her tenure as executive director built lasting partnerships to enrich the theatre. She led SCCT to win the 2003 South Carolina Secretary of State Angel Award, 2010 SCTA Founder’s Award, 2018 SCTA Theatre of Distinction Award, and 2020 Community Foundation of Greenville’s Leadership in Arts Award; and

Whereas, she has served as head of the Cultural Coalition on the Metropolitan Arts Council Board since 2010, as cofounder of the Caine Halter Lungs for Life 5K since 2007, on the YMCA Metro Board, on the Caine Halter YMCA Board, treasurer of the West End Association Board, and on the Downtown Soccer Association; and

Whereas, honored with the 2013 Metropolitan Arts Council (MAC) Visionary Award and named to *Greenville Business* magazine’s“50 Most Influential 2019” and “Most Influential Hall of Fame 2020,” Ms. Bell has won the gratitude of the South Carolina House of Representatives for years of distinguished service to South Carolina Children’s Theatre, and the members wish her well as she transitions to the leisurely pace of her well‑earned retirement. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, congratulate Debbie Bell, executive director of South Carolina Children’s Theatre, on the occasion of her retirement after thirty‑four years of outstanding service, and wish her continued happiness in all her future endeavors.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Debbie Bell.

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