**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO CELEBRATE THE JOYOUS OCCASION OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY‑FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF VOORHEES UNIVERSITY AND TO CONGRATULATE AND COMMEND ITS ADMINISTRATION, FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY AND A QUARTER OF DEDICATED SERVICE TO PROVIDING SIGNIFICANT EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

Whereas, inspiration, determination, imagination, faith: These have been pillar principles in a more than century‑long history of changing minds and lives at Voorhees College, recently renamed Voorhees University during its one hundred twenty‑fifth anniversary Founders’ Week celebration, held April 2‑10, 2022; and

Whereas, that history began with Elizabeth Evelyn Wright, who at age 23 came to Bamberg County. A native of Georgia, she had found her inspiration while studying at Booker T. Washington’s famed Tuskegee Institute. Knowing the importance of education, she moved to Denmark and started the first of several schools in the rural area, in the process surviving threats, attacks, and arson; and

Whereas, Ms. Wright went back to Tuskegee to finish her degree before returning to South Carolina to try again. Undeterred and envisioning a better future for Blacks through education, she founded Denmark Industrial School in 1897, modeling it after Tuskegee. New Jersey philanthropist Ralph Voorhees and his wife donated five thousand dollars to buy the land and build the first building, allowing the school to open in 1902 with Elizabeth Wright as principal. It was the only high school for Blacks in the area; and

Whereas, in 1924, the American Church Institute for Negroes, part of the Episcopal Church, agreed to support the school. It was the beginning of a long relationship between the school and the church, an affiliation that continues today. In 1947, the school became Voorhees School and Junior College. In 1962, it was accredited as the four‑year Voorhees College; and

Whereas, the original partnership between the church and Voorhees was based on the fact that the church alone cannot nourish and strengthen people without the help of Christian institutions of learning. At the same time, Voorhees cannot effectively guide, educate, and shape young minds without the spiritual influence of the church. These long‑held values set the standard by which Voorhees judges its teaching, scholarship, and service programs today. For the church, Voorhees is both a ministry and an investment, as well as a substantial benefit to society; and

Whereas, the college strives to balance practical career training with a well‑rounded background in the liberal arts. Dating back to Elizabeth Wright’s era, there has been debate between those who advocate education aimed at teaching job skills and those who believe that a liberal education helps young adults develop as leaders. The Voorhees curriculum today is a mixture of the two views; and

Whereas, today, Voorhees students combine intellect and faith as they prepare for professional careers. They learn to thrive in a diverse global society while pursuing lifelong learning, healthy living, and an abiding faith in God. They aim to improve their communities, society, and themselves; and

Whereas, grateful for Voorhees’ long and distinguished service in educating our youth, the members of the South Carolina House extend to this fine institution best wishes for many more years of serving as a blessing and a beacon of light to multitudes. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, celebrate the joyous occasion of the one hundred twenty‑fifth anniversary of Voorhees University and congratulate and commend its administration, faculty, staff, and students for more than a century and a quarter of dedicated service to providing significant educational opportunities in South Carolina.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Dr. Ronnie Hopkins, president of Voorhees University, on behalf of the university.

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