

Regular Session, 2010

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 269

BY REPRESENTATIVES MORENO AND RICHMOND

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To commend Judith Watts of New Orleans upon her retirement from Agenda for Children.

WHEREAS, Judith Watts is retiring after more than twenty-six years of dedicated service to Agenda for Children, Louisiana's longest standing child advocacy organization; and

WHEREAS, a native of Youngstown, Ohio, Ms. Watts has called Louisiana home since 1962, when she relocated here with her family; she began her college education at Wellesley College and graduated from Newcomb College of Tulane University with a bachelor of arts degree in 1963; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Watts began her long and illustrious career of dedication to children in 1972, when she was hired by the Innovative Education Coalition to create and operate the Teacher Resource Service; she continued her commitment to children as the director of the Sarah Allen Child Care Center from 1976 until 1978; she brought her vision of improving the quality of child care to the St. Mark's Community Center, where she started the day care training program and oversaw child care centers operated by the agency from 1978 until 1987; during her time at St. Mark's, she created the Child Care Resource Service and was named assistant executive director; and

WHEREAS, along with several other child advocates, Ms. Watts formed Louisiana's first statewide child advocacy organization, Agenda for Children, in 1984, and through her distinguished service as president and chief executive officer, she has brought about many important victories for Louisiana's children and families; and

WHEREAS one of Ms. Watts' and Agenda for Children's earliest victories for children was leading the fight to require licensing of child care centers, and she has implemented many programs at Agenda for Children to improve the quality of early education, starting the first child care resource and referral program in New Orleans,

developing the positive steps child care provider training program and the child care technical assistance program, leading the successful effort to require training for family child care home providers, and advocating for the attainment of millions of additional dollars for child care for Louisiana's youngest children; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Watts was a critical early supporter of many community organizations in New Orleans' Central City neighborhood, including the Central City Renaissance Collaborative, the Ashé Cultural Arts Center, and the Making Connections Initiative, and she brought together advocates and service providers to form the Children's Services Collaborative to address the array of unmet needs and challenges faced by children in New Orleans; and

WHEREAS, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Ms. Watts and Agenda for Children convened the Greater New Orleans Child Care Rebuild Collaborative to assist in the rebuilding of child care centers, raising several million dollars and assisting in the building of ten child care centers; and

WHEREAS, under Ms. Watts' leadership, Agenda for Children produces annually the Louisiana Kids Count Data Book, which provides important parish-level data on the well-being of children and families across the state; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Watts' vast accomplishments also include important victories in the area of juvenile justice reform, as she helped lead the fight to close some of Louisiana's most notorious juvenile prisons and implement significant reforms to the juvenile justice system; she has continuously raised her voice against racism and oppression by proudly serving on the board of the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond and has instituted anti-racism priorities into the mission statement and organizational culture of Agenda for Children; she has fought for policies and programs that help lift families up from poverty; and she has been very instrumental in reducing the rate of uninsured children in the state of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Watts has served on numerous boards as a true leader and visionary on behalf of the needs of the state's children; and

WHEREAS, for her many contributions, Ms. Watts was honored with the Florette Angel Award from Voices for America's Children, and in addition to her many professional accomplishments, she is the loving and proud mother and grandmother of three children and

six grandchildren and has served as the organist at St. Mark's United Methodist Church in New Orleans for more than two decades; and

WHEREAS, Judith Watts merits a special measure of commendation for the tremendous pride and honor she brings to the city of New Orleans and the state of Louisiana.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend Judith Watts of New Orleans for her outstanding accomplishments, does hereby congratulate her upon her retirement from Agenda for Children, does hereby recognize and record for posterity her singular contributions to the children and families of Louisiana, and does hereby extend best wishes for continued success and happiness in all of her future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Judith Watts.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE