

2018 -- H 7989

LC005089

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2018

H O U S E R E S O L U T I O N

CONGRATULATING DENISE PANICHAS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE SAMARITANS OF RHODE ISLAND, FOR RECEIVING THE JOHN KIFFNEY PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD FROM THE PROVIDENCE NEWSPAPER GUILD FOLLIES

Introduced By: Representatives Mattiello, Shekarchi, Lancia, Nardolillo, and Solomon

Date Introduced: March 22, 2018

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, The John Kiffney Public Service Award is given annually in honor and
2 memory of the reporter and Follies producer who died in 1987. Ms. Denise Panichas, Executive
3 Director of the Samaritans of Rhode Island, is the 2018 recipient of this prestigious award; and

4 WHEREAS, The Samaritans of Rhode Island was established in Providence, Rhode
5 Island, in 1977. Its mission is to reduce the number of suicides by offering an array of programs
6 and services to help those in need, from having dedicated volunteers available at all times to
7 listen nonjudgmentally, either in person or on their 24 hour crisis hotline, to the concerns
8 expressed by those contemplating suicide. The Samaritans of Rhode Island also works tirelessly
9 to eliminate the stigma of talking about suicide, offers access to information and services to
10 people affected by suicide, including families and friends of those who contemplated suicide or
11 committed suicide, and to increase awareness and to educate the public about issues related to
12 suicide and mental illness; and

13 WHEREAS, In 2001, Ms. Denise Panichas, after a distinguished career in government
14 and consulting, accepted a position to direct the Samaritans of Rhode Island. A position that was
15 supposed to be temporary and last only six weeks has, to the good fortune of the Rhode Island
16 citizenry, become permanent and since then, Ms. Panichas has used her extraordinary talents
17 along with a tireless work ethic, exemplary leadership, and abiding integrity to lead the
18 Samaritans of Rhode Island to new heights of public service. She skillfully led the Samaritans of
19 Rhode Island through the deep recession of 2008, and found innovative ways to attain corporate

1 charitable support, despite their fears of being “associated with and stigmatized by” any
2 attachments with the subject of suicide; and

3 WHEREAS, The Samaritans of Rhode Island had 225 volunteers in 2017 and has had
4 more than 1,380 volunteers since its inception. Altogether, their volunteers have donated more
5 than 276,000 hours of time assisting those struggling with the issue of suicide. The Samaritans of
6 Rhode Island received more than 140,000 visitors annually to their website and, since 1977, have
7 received more than 500,000 calls to its hotline, averaging 5,392 hotline calls per day; and

8 WHEREAS, The need for the Samaritans of Rhode Island and the dedicated services
9 provided by people like Ms. Panichas and its many volunteers, has never been greater. According
10 to the Rhode Island Medical Examiner’s Office, approximately 1,856 Rhode Islanders have died
11 from suicide since 2000, averaging 103 persons per year; and

12 WHEREAS, Thanks to the efforts of Ms. Panichas and her dedicated staff, many Rhode
13 Island lives have been saved by the Samaritans of Rhode Island. Our state has been quite
14 fortunate to have Denise Panichas at the helm of the Samaritans of Rhode Island since 2001 and
15 we look forward to having her continue her exemplary and life-saving service for many years to
16 come; now, therefore be it

17 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and
18 Providence Plantations hereby congratulates Ms. Denise Panichas, Executive Director of the
19 Samaritans of Rhode Island, for receiving the 2018 John Kiffney Public Service Award from the
20 Providence Newspaper Guild Follies and thanks her for her life-saving work and leadership on
21 mental health and suicide prevention issues; and be it further

22 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
23 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Ms. Denise Panichas, Executive Director of the
24 Samaritans of Rhode Island.

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