

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 743

By Love

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Dr. Jamye Coleman Williams of Atlanta, Georgia.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. Jamye Coleman Williams of Atlanta, Georgia, a phenomenal woman and educator who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for her fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, born on December 15, 1918, Dr. Williams lived an amazing life and experienced firsthand the breadth and span of American history, witnessing and influencing the many changes in society; and

WHEREAS, a native of Louisville, Kentucky, Dr. Williams was the daughter of an AME minister and a religious writer; she completed her Bachelor of Arts degree with honors in English in 1938 from Wilberforce University, the nation's first private, historically Black university, owned and operated by African Americans, and went on to earn a Master of Arts degree in English from the historically Black Fisk University; and

WHEREAS, following the completion of her master's degree, Dr. Williams spent the next twenty years teaching at four AME colleges: Edward Waters College, Shorter College, Morris Brown College, and Wilberforce University; and

WHEREAS, in 1959, Dr. Williams completed her Ph.D. in speech communication at The Ohio State University and joined the faculty of Tennessee State University that fall; she became a full professor of the Department of Communication and took over as head of the department in 1973, serving in that capacity until her retirement in 1987; and

WHEREAS, while her academic career took off, Dr. Williams also began to ascend the leadership ranks of the AME Church; she served as a delegate to the AME General Conference

in 1964 and became a board member of the National Council of Churches in 1968. From 1976 to 1984, she served as an alternate member of the AME Church's Judicial Council, and from 1977 until 1985, she served as president of the 13<sup>th</sup> District Lay Organization; and

WHEREAS, at the 1984 General Conference, Dr. Williams was elected editor of *The AME Church Review*, the oldest African-American literary journal, holding that post for eight years; Dr. Williams also paved the way for others in the AME church, helping win the elections of all the female bishops; and

WHEREAS, prior to moving to Atlanta, Georgia, in 2003, Dr. Williams was a forty-five-year member of St. John AME Church, Nashville; at the time of her passing, she was a devoted member of Big Bethel AME Church; and

WHEREAS, during her forty-five years in Nashville, Dr. Williams was active in her community, serving on several interdenominational organizations, community groups, and civic committees; she worked as a member of the NAACP's Executive Committee and, in 1999, received the organization's Presidential Award; and

WHEREAS, she was also active with the YWCA and Community Nashville and a founding member of The Women's Fund of the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Williams was known for her fierce devotion to her alma mater, Wilberforce University, where she taught for twelve years and served as a trustee and then a trustee emerita; Dr. Williams was also a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and The Links, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, she was also deeply devoted to her family and always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, she was predeceased by her husband of more than seventy-five years, Dr. McDonald Williams, in 2019; and

WHEREAS, she is survived by her daughter, Donna M. Williams; grandson, Douglass P. (Pamela) Selby; two great-granddaughters, Jamye Selby and Payton Selby; a niece, Frieda Coleman Minga; and a host of extended family, former students, and friends; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Williams leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all her chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we should remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Dr. Jamye Coleman Williams, reflecting fondly upon her impeccable character and her stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Dr. Williams.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.