

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 149

By Akbari

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend BRIDGES on the occasion of its 100th anniversary.

WHEREAS, it is the privilege of the members of this General Assembly to recognize those service organizations that edify, uplift, and enrich the lives of the young people of this State; and

WHEREAS, rooted in the belief that young people can and should have a vital role in making Memphis a better place to live, work, and play, BRIDGES has inspired countless individuals to become confident and courageous leaders committed to community transformation, and 2022 marked one century of passionate devotion to that important work; and

WHEREAS, founded as Church Mission Help in 1922 by St. Mary's Cathedral and Calvary Church and operating under the auspices of the Episcopal Church, the organization endeavored to help young, unmarried mothers find prenatal and postnatal care, housing, and jobs; and

WHEREAS, the organization evolved over the years in moniker and in mission, becoming Youth Service in Memphis (under Youth Service of Tennessee) in 1947 and breaking off into an independent entity under the same name in 1962; during the 1960s, the organization became the first nongovernmental organization in the Memphis area to integrate its social outreach services, working with other agencies and church communities to best support youth going through that unprecedented time in Memphis history; and

WHEREAS, leading the way in racial justice, the organization racially integrated its professional staff in 1963 before any other nonprofit in the area and held its first racially

integrated sleepaway camp just months after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.;
and

WHEREAS, the organization was known as Youth Service USA from 1970 to 1996, during which time it became prominent in the federal government's strategy to provide aid to the general population from domestic military installations; and

WHEREAS, the organization has operated under its current name since 1996, when "BRIDGES" was taken to reflect the new direction of the organization with the Bridge Builders program, which, since 1988, has been bringing together adolescents of all racial, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds to build relationships and grow as leaders; Bridge Builders became a program that belonged to the entire Memphis community and a symbol of unity and collaboration; and

WHEREAS, today, BRIDGES works at the forefront of the national movement for youth development; the Bridge Builders program annually engages more than 1,100 youth representing every public, private, and parochial high school in the Greater Memphis region, and additional workshops, events, and programs attract another 4,000 diverse youth from throughout the Memphis area, while the paid youth fellowship program includes fifteen youth organizers who work in issue-based cohorts; and

WHEREAS, Bridge Builders develops and cultivates youth through leadership training and community-building activities for those in grades six through twelve in the Greater Memphis area; students engage in leadership development, civic engagement, and community service as part of their year-long program experience, including a week-long Summer Leadership Conference; and

WHEREAS, the program has graduated tens of thousands of youth over the last thirty years, many of whom have assumed leadership roles in Memphis and beyond in a variety of sectors; and

WHEREAS, for the last 100 years, BRIDGES has provided invaluable services to the youth of Memphis, indelibly changing lives for the better and lifting up the entire community in the process; and

WHEREAS, it is most fitting that we honor the longstanding service of BRIDGES at this time; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor and commend BRIDGES of Shelby County for its important work with the youth of Tennessee and join in celebrating the organization's 100th anniversary, extending our best wishes for much continued success.

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.