

2015-J1696

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commending Executive Director Lillian Roberts upon the occasion of her retirement after numerous years of distinguished service to District Council 37

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to acknowledge those individuals whose professional lives and civic endeavors serve to enhance the stature of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to commend Executive Director Lillian Roberts upon the occasion of her retirement after numerous years of distinguished service to District Council 37, New York City's largest public employee union; and

WHEREAS, Lillian Roberts has a long, proud history as a unionist; she grew up in the tenements of Chicago's South Side, and became a nurse's aide; and

WHEREAS, In 1959, she joined the hospital local of American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), becoming both a shop steward and an officer; and

WHEREAS, Lillian Roberts was hired as a staff representative by AFSCME District Council 19 in Chicago; she was instrumental in organizing more than 20,000 workers at four mental hospitals, forming five locals under the AFSCME; and

WHEREAS, Lillian Roberts relocated to New York City in 1965, to build up DC 37's Hospital Division; one year later, she led the union's campaign to organize thousands of city hospital workers; and

WHEREAS, From 1967-1981, Lillian Roberts held the position of Associate Director; she played a major role in organizing new members, and establishing an array of benefits, including the largest union-based adult education program in the United States; and

WHEREAS, In the late 1970s and early 1980s, she brought thousands of

workers in federally funded jobs into DC 37; and

WHEREAS, From 1981-1987, Lillian Roberts served as the New York State Labor Commissioner, becoming both the first woman as well as the first African American to hold this esteemed position; and

WHEREAS, On February 26, 2002, Lillian Roberts was elected Executive Director of DC 37; she was re-elected several times, the last being on January 26, 2010; and

WHEREAS, Lillian Roberts initially focused on fighting for a fair contract for the members of DC 37; she led the Bargaining Committee in contract negotiations with New York City to provide raises, and safeguard the benefits of the union members who make the city run; and

WHEREAS, Under Lillian Roberts' leadership, DC 37 won the right to represent 2,500 Job Training Participants, whom the union pushes the city to hire upon completion of their training; and

WHEREAS, In 2005, Lillian Roberts launched the innovative DC 37 Municipal Housing Program, which allows members and city workers preference for 5% of units in city-sponsored lotteries for affordable homes and apartments, down payment grants, and homebuyer training and education; and

WHEREAS, With cooperation from AFSCME, Lillian Roberts established a DC 37 Organizing Department to reach out to non-union workers in DC 37-related titles, and bring them the benefits of union membership; and

WHEREAS, Under Lillian Roberts' luminous leadership, DC 37 grew to a peak membership of 125,000 public workers in New York City and the State, 50,000 retirees, 1,000 job titles, and 55 locals; and

WHEREAS, Throughout her tenure, Lillian Roberts received many awards and accolades, including the 2007 30 Most Influential Black New Yorkers, by the NEW YORK POST; and the Distinguished Leadership Award from the

United Negro College Fund; furthermore, she was appointed to the New York State September 11th Workers Protection Task Force; and

WHEREAS, In addition, Lillian Roberts also accepted the Triumph Award

for Advocacy from the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc., as well as the Clara Lemlich Public Service Award from Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire Memorial leaders for her efforts to reform workers' compensation, and improve occupational safety in New York State; and WHEREAS, Lillian Roberts holds a Doctor of Human Letters from the College of New Rochelle, and received the NAACP Roy Wilkins Award, the First Lady of Labor Award from the Episcopal Churchwomen, and the Freedom Fighter Award from the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists; and WHEREAS, Lillian Roberts also served as Vice President of both the New York State AFL-CIO and the NYC Central Labor Council, and held the position of Co-Chair of the Municipal Labor Committee; and WHEREAS, Lillian Roberts, a woman of singular distinction, whose wisdom, guidance and unparalleled professionalism, have earned her the admiration, esteem, and affection of her colleagues and all those she has come in to contact with during her distinguished service to District Council 37; now, therefore, be it RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend Lillian Roberts upon the occasion of her retirement after over 60 years of distinguished service to District Council 37, New York City's largest public employee union; and be it further RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Lillian Roberts.