

2021-J2539

Senate Resolution No. 2539

BY: Senator MANNION

COMMENDING Willie Mae Goodman for 50 years of service as a Champion for individuals with developmental disabilities

WHEREAS, It is incumbent upon the people of the State of New York to recognize and acknowledge those within our midst who have made significant contributions to the quality of life therein; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to commend Willie Mae Goodman for 50 years of service as a Champion for individuals with developmental disabilities to be recognized at a party held in her honor on Wednesday, May 11, 2022; and

WHEREAS, During this auspicious occasion, Willie Mae Goodman, affectionately known as Goody to many, will also celebrate her 91st Birthday; and

WHEREAS, In 1955, Willie Mae Goodman gave birth to her daughter Margaret, who was diagnosed as profoundly retarded and multiply handicapped; even though the doctors believed Margaret would not live a long life, Willie Mae chose to dedicate her life to her daughter's well-being, proclaiming, "from this day forward my life is hers and her life is mine"; and

WHEREAS, At the age of four, Margaret Goodman was placed in

Willowbrook State School, Building 14; in 1961, the Department of Mental Hygiene began to quietly transfer approximately 200 severe and profoundly disabled children, including Margaret, from the wards at Willowbrook and place them in a building abandoned by New York City in 1960, on the lower East Side of Manhattan formally known as the Gouverneur Hospital; and

WHEREAS, Willie Mae Goodman realized these children needed an advocate to ensure their survival, and she enthusiastically took on the role; in 1970, faced with the threat that the Gouverneur residents would be returned to Willowbrook State School, she became the voice of the newly formed Gouverneur Parents Association (GPA); and

WHEREAS, The GPA became the first group of parents to take the Department of Mental Hygiene to court, and through a court injunction, successfully blocked the transfer of their loved ones back to Willowbrook State School; and

WHEREAS, In 1975, Willie Mae Goodman successfully obtained legal affirmation that the Gouverneur residents were members of the Willowbrook class, and as such, entitled to the same benefits and protections available to all class members; and

WHEREAS, Since then, Willie Mae Goodman has continued to fight for "her kids" from Gouverneur; due to her steadfast and unrelenting commitment, many of the residents have lived well beyond what most expected and have experienced the benefits of placement in

community-based homes, including her beloved daughter who has been a resident of the 119th Street Residence since 1991; and

WHEREAS, A true visionary, Willie Mae Goodman has worked tirelessly

to address society's ignorance on the needs of the developmentally disabled and helped tear down any barriers which have denied these individuals community integration opportunities; and

WHEREAS, In 1991, Willie Mae Goodman assisted her Community Board in establishing a Committee on Health and Mental Retardation, and a year later, in an effort to promote community awareness, she organized and held the first of many multicultural parades through the streets of East Harlem; and

WHEREAS, For the last 30 years, Willie Mae Goodman has hosted a workshop about current issues affecting those with developmental disabilities at the Annual New York State Association of Black, Puerto Rican and Asian Legislators Conference; and

WHEREAS, For five decades, Willie Mae Goodman has truly served as an advocate for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Rare indeed is the impressive dedication shown by an individual for the benefits of others which Willie Mae Goodman has displayed throughout her life; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that when individuals of such noble aims and accomplishments are brought to our attention, they should be celebrated and recognized by all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend Willie Mae Goodman for 50 years of service as a Champion for individuals with developmental disabilities; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Willie Mae Goodman.