

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 205

Celebrating the life of Thelma Bland Watson, Ph.D.

Agreed to by the Senate, March 9, 2022
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 10, 2022

WHEREAS, Thelma Bland Watson, Ph.D., esteemed executive director of Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging in Richmond and a leading advocate for older adults in the Commonwealth, died on June 25, 2021; and

WHEREAS, Thelma Watson's educational pursuits included a bachelor's degree in sociology from Virginia State University with a concentration in social work and a graduate degree in gerontology and doctoral degree in public policy and administration from Virginia Commonwealth University; and

WHEREAS, since 2002, Thelma Watson served as the executive director of Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging, a nonprofit organization with a mission to enhance the quality of life of seniors and families in the Greater Richmond area; and

WHEREAS, Senior Connections thrived under Thelma Watson's leadership and today serves approximately 25,000 older Virginians and individuals with disabilities, primarily through a variety of educational programs, counseling, and health care services; and

WHEREAS, prior to her work with Senior Connections, Thelma Watson was the Commissioner of Aging in the Virginia Department for the Aging, now part of the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, under three governors, helping to ensure the effective implementation of public policy for the benefit of older Virginians in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, from 1997 to 2002, Thelma Watson served as the executive director of field services for the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare in Washington, D.C., advocating tirelessly for federal policies that would support the care and well-being of older adults; and

WHEREAS, Thelma Watson also previously served as assistant executive director of the Crater District Area Agency on Aging in Petersburg as well as in various capacities with the Crater Planning District Commission; and

WHEREAS, Thelma Watson demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to her community through her service on various boards and committees, including those of the Alzheimer's Association of Greater Richmond, the Virginia Health Quality Center, project:HOMES, and Covenant Woods retirement community; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of her longstanding support of the community, Thelma Watson received numerous honors and accolades in her lifetime, including the 2015 Humanitarian Award from the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities and 2019 Person of the Year honors from the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*; and

WHEREAS, guided throughout her life by her faith, Thelma Watson enjoyed worship and fellowship with her community at Union Branch Baptist Church in Chesterfield and supported its ministries in several capacities over the years; and

WHEREAS, Thelma Watson will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by her loving husband, Walter; her children, Chrystal, Damali, and Daniel, and their families; and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Thelma Bland Watson, Ph.D., executive director of Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging, whose tireless efforts and dedication to serving others helped countless seniors lead healthier, happier, and more meaningful lives; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Thelma Bland Watson, Ph.D., as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for her memory.

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