

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 62

BY SENATOR PETERSON

A RESOLUTION

To express the sincere and heartfelt condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the death of Dr. James Edward Charles, an African-American trailblazer in the Terrebonne Parish public school system.

WHEREAS, it is with great sadness that Louisiana learned of the death of James Charles on May 20, 2020, at the age of seventy-seven; and

WHEREAS, James Charles, born on June 29, 1942, to Benjamin Sr. and Sadie Westley Charles, was a native of Terrebonne Parish, and a resident of Houma, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, his interest in education, as a lifetime force deeply instilled by his mother Sadie, along with his personal goal of expecting the best of himself and of those he encountered, was the perfect footprint for his life accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, James Charles received his Bachelor, Master, and Honorary Doctorate degrees from Southern University A&M College; and

WHEREAS, Dr. James Charles began his career in 1969 as a math teacher at Southdown High School in Houma during the year the school was converted from an all black student body to an integrated elementary school; and

WHEREAS, he taught throughout the parish before becoming an elementary math curriculum specialist, an assistant principal, and a coordinator of migrant education; and

WHEREAS, in 1988, he was named the first African-American principal at a high school in Terrebonne Parish at Ellender Memorial High School, a school with a reputation for being a place where nobody cared to learn; and

WHEREAS, under Dr. James Charles' tutelage, the school's image was turned around and a philosophy was ingrained in the school motto, "If you thought you could, you could."; and

WHEREAS, in 1979, Dr. James Charles began his administrative career as an assistant principal, served as supervisor of secondary adult and vocational education, and as Interim Superintendent of Terrebonne; and

WHEREAS, during this time many of his co-workers described his keen administrative skills as charismatic because of his commitment to treating people with dignity which made him unique; and

WHEREAS, Dr. James Charles completed his thirty-three years as an educator as the first African-American Assistant Superintendent of the Terrebonne Parish School Board; and

WHEREAS, he is survived by his wife, Bernadine Poindexter Charles; four daughters, Tanya Brown, Arlanda J. Williams, Angela Charles, Heather Gobert (Robert); six grandchildren; Joshua Williams, Chelsea Charles, Jere' Williams, Cody and Carson Brown, and Roman Gobert; a brother, Leroy Charles; a sister, Joyce Judy Charles-Bolden, and a host of other relatives and friends; and

WHEREAS, he was preceded in death by his parents, five brothers, paternal and maternal grandparents, and a son-in-law, Dwayne Washington; and

WHEREAS, of the many who were blessed to know Dr. James Edward Charles, they would say he lived out his credos that he taught them: "When you enter a place, enter as a gentleman. When you leave, always leave as one."

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby extend sincere condolences to Dr. James Edward Charles' family on the occasion of his passing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to his wife, Bernadine Poindexter Charles.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE