

2015-J3549

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the death of Jacqueline A. Berrien, distinguished citizen and devoted member of her community

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to citizens of the State of New York whose lifework and civic endeavor served to enhance the quality of life in their communities and the great State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Jacqueline A. Berrien, the former chairwoman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and a veteran civil rights lawyer who had earlier served five years as associate director-counsel of the NAACP's Legal Defense and Educational Fund, died on November 9, 2015, at the age of 53; and

WHEREAS, A resident of both Washington and Brooklyn, Jacqueline A. Berrien led the EEOC from 2010 to 2014, when her term expired; her leadership and passion for making real our nation's promise of equal opportunity for all truly changed the country for the better; and

WHEREAS, Jacqueline A. Berrien distinguished herself in her profession and by her sincere dedication and substantial contribution to the welfare of her community; and

WHEREAS, With a steadfast and unremitting commitment to underrepresented communities, Jacqueline A. Berrien injected new life into the EEOC with new ideas and strategies which helped refocus the commission on its enduring mission of protecting the most fundamental rights of all Americans; and

WHEREAS, Under the luminous direction of Jacqueline A. Berrien, the EEOC took action against systemic employment practices and work rules that discriminated against classes of people on the basis of ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disabilities and religious beliefs; and

WHEREAS, In addition, Jacqueline A. Berrien was instrumental in the

publishing of guidelines for the consideration of records related to arrests and convictions in employment decisions, the role of pregnancy in employment decisions and the application of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act; and

WHEREAS, Born in Washington on November 28, 1961, Jacqueline Ann Berrien graduated from the Connelly School of the Holy Child in Potomac, Maryland in 1979; she went on to earn a degree from Ohio's Oberlin College in 1983, and from Harvard Law School in 1986; and

WHEREAS, Jacqueline A. Berrien began her illustrious legal career with the Voting Rights Project of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights in Washington, and with the National Legal Department and Women's Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union in New York; and

WHEREAS, In 1994, Jacqueline A. Berrien became an assistant counsel to the NAACP's Legal Defense and Education Fund, during which time she focused on voting rights and school desegregation litigation; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the early 2000s, Jacqueline A. Berrien was a program officer with the Ford Foundation's Peace and Social Justice Program; she then returned to the Legal Defense Fund in 2004 as associate director-counsel, and taught at both Harvard Law School and New York Law School; and

WHEREAS, In addition to her husband of 28 years, Peter M. Williams, Jacqueline A. Berrien is survived by a brother, Clifford Eric Berrien; and

WHEREAS, Jacqueline A. Berrien's commitment to excellence, and her spirit of humanity, carried over into all fields of enterprise, including charitable and civic endeavors; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit, imbued with a sense of compassion, and comforted by a loving family, Jacqueline A. Berrien

leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all she served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Jacqueline A. Berrien, distinguished citizen and devoted member of her community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Jacqueline A. Berrien.