

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 17

BY SENATOR BARROW AND REPRESENTATIVE MCFARLAND

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To celebrate the 29th Annual Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Conference and to recognize its founders, Dot Thibodeaux and Danna Spayde, for their dedication, support, and inspiration to grandfamilies across Louisiana.

WHEREAS, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) began in 1993, as a result of a conversation between one grandparent, Dot Thibodeaux, raising her grandson and a social worker, Danna Spayde, who worked for the Council on Aging; and

WHEREAS, the first action of GRG was to start a support group of grandparents raising grandchildren in Baton Rouge with meetings at the East Baton Rouge Council on Aging; those meetings continue today as monthly gatherings at Family Road of Greater Baton Rouge; and

WHEREAS, these monthly gatherings lead to hosting an annual statewide conference that offers a day of workshops, respite, and community building for caregiving grandparents, reinforcing the message that they are not alone in their journey; and

WHEREAS, in its 29th year, the conference also serves to recognize the significant contributions and challenges faced by the more than 55,000 grandparents in Louisiana who are raising their grandchildren, often with limited resources, but boundless love and determination; and

WHEREAS, GRG provides vital services to grandfamilies, including support groups, emergency assistance, legal consultation, and educational workshops; and

WHEREAS, GRG's emergency assistance includes food, diapers, formula, gas, clothing, and school supplies, as well as financial support to help maintain housing and

utilities for families facing crisis; and

WHEREAS, these services are often a critical lifeline to grandfamilies, especially considering that over thirty percent of such families in Louisiana live at or below the poverty line, and more than seventy-five percent fall below the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) threshold; and

WHEREAS, GRG operates without any paid staff and is led by a dedicated three-member volunteer board of directors, all of whom are grandparents with lived experience in raising grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana ranks fourth in the nation for the highest percentage of children living with grandparents, with approximately 117,859 children living in grandparent-headed households, and nearly 65,000 of them living there without either parent present; and

WHEREAS, a survey of 200 grandparents raising 433 children across the state paints a powerful picture of love, sacrifice, and resilience; a safety net that prevents thousands of children from entering the foster care system, yet one that is fraying from lack of support; and

WHEREAS, many times these grandfamilies are formed under difficult circumstances and statistics support that children in kinship care typically fare better than those placed in non-relative foster care, as the children in kinship care experience greater emotional stability, are more likely to remain in their communities and schools, stay with siblings, and perform better academically; and

WHEREAS, the report generated by the survey for this conference outlines twenty action steps for legislative and community action; bold and compassionate proposals aim to strengthen the support system for grandfamilies, honor their contributions, and ensure that both grandparents and the children in their care are provided with dignity, opportunity, and security; and

WHEREAS, for over two decades Dot Thibodeaux and Danna Spayde guided GRG with their keen insight and strategic wisdom, and even though these inspiring ladies have passed on, GRG continues Dot and Danna's legacy of uplifting, protecting, and empowering grandparent caregivers.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby celebrate the 29th Annual Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Conference and acknowledge the exemplary service it facilitates for grandfamilies in Louisiana and extend heartfelt gratitude to the families of founders Dot Thibodeaux and Danna Spayde for their selfless and visionary leadership.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Information Center of Louisiana.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES