

BY: M. of A. Ryan

COMMENDING Donna Fernandes upon the occasion of her retirement after 17 years of distinguished service as President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Buffalo Zoo in Buffalo, New York

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and honor those distinguished citizens of this great Empire State who have devoted themselves to faithfully serving the best interests of their community and the needs of its residents; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commend Donna Fernandes upon the occasion of her retirement after 17 years of distinguished service as President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Buffalo Zoo in Buffalo, New York; and

WHEREAS, Growing up in rural Massachusetts, Donna Fernandes loved to explore the woods behind her house, searching for insects and other creatures; she went on to receive a degree from Boston's Simmons School of Management, as well as her doctorate from Princeton in ecology, evolution, and behavior; and

WHEREAS, Founded in 1875, the Buffalo Zoo is the third oldest zoo in the United States; by the time Donna Fernandes was named President and CEO in 2000, the facilities had deteriorated so badly the zoo lost its accreditation from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and was only attracting an average of 345,000 people per year; and

WHEREAS, Inspired by Buffalo's surrounding waters, Niagara Falls and Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, Donna Fernandes introduced the idea of reinventing the zoo by organizing it around the theme of water; and

WHEREAS, Under her luminous leadership, the Buffalo Zoo was revitalized; so far, Donna Fernandes has helped raise funds needed to complete the first phase of her planned renovation which includes new attractions such as Otter Creek, Sea Lion Cove, M&T Bank Rainforest Falls, Vanishing Animals, Ecostation, Delta Sonic Heritage Farm, and Arctic Edge Annual; and

WHEREAS, Donna Fernandes has brought the Buffalo Zoo to a new era; their Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accreditation is on its eighth consecutive 5-year term, and their captive breeding programs have been a huge success; the zoo has birthed a variety of animals including lions, gorillas, Indian rhinos, polar bears, giraffes, Chinese three-striped box turtles, Annam leaf turtles, Massasagua rattlesnakes, Eastern hellbenders, and Puerto Rican crested toads, as well as Golden frogs; and

WHEREAS, This exceptional woman was successful in gaining the public's interest; the Buffalo Zoo's attendance record has soared to

over 500,000 per year from the average of 345,000 per year in 2000; and

WHEREAS, In her capacity as President and CEO of the Buffalo Zoo, Donna Fernandes served with loyalty, honor and distinction, and was governed by a keen sense of duty; and

WHEREAS, It is the custom 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 the great State of New York; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor Donna Fernandes upon the occasion of her retirement after 17 years of distinguished service as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Buffalo Zoo in Buffalo, New York, and to wish her continued success in all of her future endeavors; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Donna Fernandes.