

Senate Resolution No. 532

BY: Senator MAYER

MOURNING the death of Dr. Doris L. Wethers,
visionary physician, tireless advocate, and devoted
member of her community

WHEREAS, It is incumbent upon the people of the State of New York to commend and recognize those esteemed individuals within the medical community for their extraordinary and sustained contributions to the progress of medicine and the improvement of life; and

WHEREAS, It is with great sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Dr. Doris L. Wethers, noting the significance of her purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Doris L. Wethers, of the neighborhood of Hudson Heights in Manhattan, New York, died on Monday, January 28, 2019, at the age of 91; and

WHEREAS, Doris Louise Wethers was born to Dr. William and Lillian (Wilkinson) Wethers on December 14, 1927, in Passaic, New Jersey; after her parents' divorce, she and her mother and sister moved to Washington Heights in Manhattan; and

WHEREAS, After graduating from George Washington High School, Doris L. Wethers earned her Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry from Queens College; in 1952, she became the third black woman to receive her Doctor of Medicine degree from the Yale School of Medicine; and

WHEREAS, For the next decade, Dr. Doris L. Wethers practiced private medicine in pediatrics in an office next to her father's; in 1958, she became the first black attending physician at Saint Luke's Hospital; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Doris L. Wethers then held the title of Medical Director for Speedwell Services for Children from 1961-1973, and as Director of Pediatrics and founder of sickle cell anemia programs at Knickerbocker Hospital (1965-1973), Sydenham Hospital (1969-1974), and St. Luke's Hospital Center (1974-1979); and

WHEREAS, In this capacity, Dr. Doris L. Wethers conducted research and helped draft landmark legislation in New York to require screening of infants for the disorder; in 1999, she officially retired as Director of Saint Luke's sickle cell program; and

WHEREAS, Through her steadfast efforts, the average life expectancy of children born with sickle cell anemia grew from about 18 to 50; the increase was attributed largely to early detection, infection prevention through the use of penicillin and other breakthroughs that helped mitigate pain and prolong life; and

WHEREAS, In 1987, Dr. Doris L. Wethers was named the Chairwoman of a National Institutes of Health panel which recommended routine testing

for newborn babies regardless of race or ethnicity; she also helped establish the Foundation for Research and Education in Sickle Cell Disease; and

WHEREAS, In addition to her monumental work for several New York City hospitals, Dr. Doris L. Wethers was also a clinical professor at what is now known as the Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Doris L. Wethers always wanted to be a physician; she lived an immensely beautiful life built on care, kindness, and respect, touching the lives of so many people within her community; and

WHEREAS, Predeceased by her husband, Dr. Garvall H. Booker, Dr. Doris L. Wethers is survived by her two devoted sons, Buddy and David Boyd; and three treasured grandchildren, as well as numerous friends and colleagues who will long cherish her memory; and

WHEREAS, As a leader in her profession, Dr. Doris L. Wethers proved herself to be a great asset to medicine and to the health and welfare of the citizens of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Throughout her distinguished career, Dr. Doris L. Wethers served her patients with compassion and care; she contributed to the maintenance and enhancement of the highest professional standards, sharing with others her knowledge and expertise, as well as her dedication and commitment to quality health care; and

WHEREAS, Through her boundless energy and profound words of wisdom, Dr. Doris L. Wethers' legacy of true grace and infinite selflessness and kindness, will shine on through her family's vivid and happy memories; her shining light and strength will forever serve as a beacon of love and hope for all who were privileged to have known and loved such an amazing and dynamic woman; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Dr. Doris L. Wethers, visionary physician, tireless advocate, 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 Dr. Doris L. Wethers.