

BY: Senator STEWART-COUSINS

COMMENDING former Senator Velmanette Montgomery upon the occasion of her designation as the first ever recipient of the Senate Majority Leader's Legislative Legacy Award

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize and commend those individuals of outstanding purpose whose lives have been committed to public service and the pursuit of excellence in the conduct of the legislative process in this noble Empire State; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing tradition, this Legislative Body is justly proud to reflect upon those extraordinary individuals who have made everlasting contributions on behalf of their fellow men and women and have left their mark on this great Empire State; Senator Velmanette Montgomery is one such individual; she truly devoted her life to serving her government with integrity and commitment for the sole purpose of serving the needs of others; and

WHEREAS, Senator Velmanette Montgomery was first elected to the New York State Senate in 1984; after that, she was re-elected 17 consecutive times; and

WHEREAS, Senator Velmanette Montgomery was the second Black woman to be elected to this Legislative Body, first elected more than twenty years after the first Black woman to be elected to this Legislative Body, paving the way for a new generation of diverse Senators; and

WHEREAS, Senator Velmanette Montgomery represented District 25 which includes Fort Greene, Boerum Hill, Red Hook, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Sunset Park, Gowanus, and Park Slope, among other neighborhoods located within the borough of Brooklyn; and

WHEREAS, Senator Velmanette Montgomery was the longest serving Democratic Senator in New York State history, and was the first Senator to give birth to a child while serving in office; through her work, she made New York a better place to live, to work and to raise a family; and

WHEREAS, She served as the long-time secretary of the New York State Senate Democratic Conference and served on the Conference Leadership team for over a decade; in 2019, she was appointed Majority Conference Secretary; and

WHEREAS, As a trailblazing legislator and State leader, Senator Velmanette Montgomery was well-known for her effective leadership and steadfast commitment to her constituents; during her career, she worked tirelessly as an advocate for youth, public education, criminal justice reform, environmental preservation and civil rights; and

WHEREAS, During her distinguished tenure in this Legislative Body,

Senator Velmanette Montgomery sponsored numerous bills that were enacted into law and have made deep and lasting changes to better the lives of the residents of New York State; among these important accomplishments are laws prohibiting the use of shackles on pregnant women (Chapter 411 of 2009 and Chapter 570 of 2015), allowing youth in foster care to remain in care past their eighteenth birthday (Chapter 342 of 2009), and ensuring fair and equal pay for public employees (Chapter 741 of 2019); and

WHEREAS, As the Chair of the New York State Senate Standing Committee on Children and Families, Senator Velmanette Montgomery was dedicated to helping young people achieve positive outcomes through reform of the State's juvenile justice, foster care and adoptive care system; and

WHEREAS, Senator Velmanette Montgomery's dedication to improving the lives of young people led her to be a statewide champion of YouthBuild, an organization that provides opportunities for young people to realize their full potential, her support helping to achieve millions of dollars in state assistance and bicameral support for the program; and

WHEREAS, Her passion for supporting children's health and well-being led Senator Velmanette Montgomery to lead the fight to school-based health clinics, helping to secure significant state fiscal support for health-services for schools in an innovative community-based model; and

WHEREAS, Senator Velmanette Montgomery was known for her championing of incarcerated persons and understood the critical need to create a pathway for second chances; her commitment to restorative justice included her often lonely but ultimately successful crusade to Raise the Age of criminal liability; and

WHEREAS, In acknowledgment of her longtime advocacy on the issue of kinship care, Senator Velmanette Montgomery was the recipient of numerous awards including the auspicious Barbara M. Clark Kinship Champion Award; and

WHEREAS, Senator Velmanette Montgomery was not only known for her success as a legislator, but for her passion for mentoring new legislators, staff, and others, leaving a lasting impression on the next generation of leaders and lawmakers; and

WHEREAS, Prior to her service in public office, Senator Velmanette Montgomery worked as a teacher, adjunct professor, and day care director; furthermore, she was the co-founder of the Day Care Forum of New York City, and served as president of Community School Board 13; and

WHEREAS, Velmanette Montgomery obtained a master's degree in Education from New York University before becoming a Revson Fellow at Columbia University; in 1991, she was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Law from St. Joseph's College in Brooklyn; and

WHEREAS, In light of her many accomplishments and historic impact on the State Legislature and the Empire State itself, the Senate Majority

Leader has established a new award to honor her legacy on this state and her beloved community on the occasion of her retirement, and this award shall make Senator Velmanette Montgomery the first recipient of this newly established Senate Majority Leader's Legislative Legacy Award; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend former Senator Velmanette Montgomery upon the occasion of her designation as the first ever recipient of the Senate Majority Leader's Legislative Legacy Award; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Velmanette Montgomery.