

BY: Senator KENNEDY

CONGRATULATING Rahwa Ghirmatzion upon the occasion of stepping down as Executive Director of PUSH Buffalo after many years of distinguished service to this vital organization

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and honor those distinguished citizens who would devote their life's work and purpose to community service, contributing to the welfare of the citizens of their communities and this great Empire State; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to congratulate Rahwa Ghirmatzion upon the occasion of stepping down as Executive Director of PUSH Buffalo after many years of distinguished service to this vital organization; and

WHEREAS, Within every community, there are inevitably some individuals who, by virtue of their energy, vision, and dedication, command the greatest respect among their friends and colleagues, and within the community at large; Rahwa Ghirmatzion is one such individual; and

WHEREAS, Born in Asmera, Eritrea in the middle of a civil war, Rahwa Ghirmatzion came to Western New York at the age of eight by way of Sudan as a refugee; she was educated in Buffalo Public Schools before studying English Literature and Economics at the University at Buffalo where she became painstakingly aware of the disparities and inequalities within the education system and was compelled to be a part of a change; and

WHEREAS, In 2018, Rahwa Ghirmatzion became Executive Director of People United for Sustainable Housing, Inc., also known as PUSH Buffalo, a community organization which works at the grassroots level to create and implement a comprehensive revitalization plan for Buffalo's West Side, with more than 40 million dollars invested in affordable housing rehabilitation, weatherization, and green infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, In this capacity, Rahwa Ghirmatzion oversees the organization's programs and day-to-day operations, which have substantially grown under her leadership to include housing construction, solar installation, job training, and a youth center, as well as outreach and advocacy on public policy issues facing urban communities; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, PUSH Buffalo employs 40 people and has renovated more than 100 high quality homes over the past seven years; and

WHEREAS, A lifelong learner with a passion for social justice, for more than 15 years Rahwa Ghirmatzion has worked with countless community-based organizations throughout Western New York which promote

community development across sectors; and

WHEREAS, In addition to her work at PUSH Buffalo, Rahwa Ghirmatzion serves as Executive Director of Ujima Company, Inc., a multi-ethnic professional theater company whose primary purpose is the preservation, perpetuation, and performance of African American theater; she is also a founding board member of the Partnership for the Public Good (PPG); and

WHEREAS, With a steadfast and unwavering commitment to underserved and underrepresented communities, Rahwa Ghirmatzion has given tirelessly of her time and energies to ensure that alternative voices are heard, fostered and encouraged to participate in building a more just, equitable and civically engaged community; and

WHEREAS, Widely respected and greatly admired for her unrelenting dedication and prolific contributions, Rahwa Ghirmatzion has been cited on a number of occasions for her distinguished community service, including the 2017 Community Commitment Award from VOICE Buffalo and the 2013 Community Leaders Arts Award from the National Federation for Just Communities; and

WHEREAS, Rare indeed is the impressive dedication shown by an individual for the benefit of others which Rahwa Ghirmatzion has displayed throughout her life; and

WHEREAS, It has always been the objective of this Legislative Body to honor and support those individuals who have displayed their commitment to the betterment of their communities, and it is the intent of this Legislative Body to inscribe upon its records, this tribute to Rahwa Ghirmatzion, that future generations may know and appreciate her admirable character, her many benevolent deeds, and the respect and esteem in which she is held by her peers; 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 this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to congratulate Rahwa Ghirmatzion upon the occasion of stepping down as Executive Director of PUSH Buffalo after many years of distinguished service to this vital organization; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Rahwa Ghirmatzion.