

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 8

Senators Brinks and Nesbitt offered the following concurrent resolution:

1 A concurrent resolution of tribute offered as a memorial for
2 Irma Clark-Coleman, former member of the House of Representatives
3 and the Senate.

4 Whereas, It is with great admiration for her lifelong
5 dedication to public service that we pause to mark the passing of
6 Irma Clark-Coleman. The members of the Michigan Legislature were
7 shocked and deeply saddened by the loss of such a dedicated, driven
8 individual, who represented the people of Detroit at the state and
9 local levels for decades. She will be remembered for her vibrant
10 spirit and her steadfast belief in the power of public servants to
11 make the world a better place; and

12 Whereas, Irma Clark-Coleman was born in rural Georgia but
13 moved to Michigan at a young age, attending Pershing High School in

1 Detroit and earning bachelor's and master's degrees in
2 communications from Wayne State University. She was the first
3 person in her family to graduate from college. In 1967, she began
4 her career in Wayne County government, starting as an entry-level
5 stenographer and rising to become the Director of Human Relations.
6 She also served as Assistant Director of Public Information for the
7 Road Commission, Media Relations Manager for former Wayne County
8 Executive William Lucas, and Press Secretary to County Executive
9 Edward H. McNamara. In 1991, she was appointed to the Detroit Board
10 of Education, where she served as president from 1996 to 1998; and

11 Whereas, After three decades of service at the local level,
12 Irma Clark-Coleman turned her attention to state government, being
13 elected to represent the Detroiters of the Eleventh District in the
14 House of Representatives in 1998. Her experience on the Detroit
15 Board of Education was immediately recognized with her appointment
16 to the Committee on Education. During her two terms in the House,
17 she also served on the Committee on Great Lakes and Tourism and the
18 Committee on Insurance and Financial Services; and

19 Whereas, In 2002, Irma Clark-Coleman sought election to the
20 Senate, and she went on to represent the Third District, which
21 included Dearborn, River Rouge, and parts of Detroit, for eight
22 years. During her first term in the Senate, she served as minority
23 vice chair of the Committee on Education and the Committee on
24 Senior Citizens and Veterans Affairs, and she was a member of the
25 Committee on Banking and Financial Institutions and the Committee
26 on Families and Human Services. In her second term, Irma Clark-
27 Coleman was appointed to the Committee on Appropriations. She
28 continued to lead on education issues, serving as minority vice
29 chair of the Subcommittee on Community Colleges as well as the

1 Subcommittee on History, Arts, and Libraries. In addition, she
2 served as a member of the Capital Outlay Subcommittee, the Federal
3 Stimulus Oversight Subcommittee, the K-12, School Aid, Education
4 Subcommittee, and the Committee on Energy Policy and Public
5 Utilities. During her tenure in the Senate, Irma Clark-Coleman was
6 appointed by Governor Jennifer Granholm to the National Education
7 Commission of the States and the Cherry Commission on Higher
8 Education; and

9 Whereas, In her 12 years in the Michigan Legislature, Irma
10 Clark-Coleman was an advocate for children and families, with a
11 particular focus on educational reform. She repeatedly sponsored
12 legislation to reduce class sizes in kindergarten through third
13 grade and to require school districts to adopt specific standards
14 for the promotion of students to the next grade. In 2004, a package
15 of legislation including one of Clark-Coleman's bills was enacted
16 to permit students studying theology, divinity, or religion at
17 certain institutions to receive state scholarships and grants. She
18 also successfully shepherded legislation to clarify grandparenting
19 time and to provide assistance to family members acting as
20 guardians for abused or neglected children; and

21 Whereas, Irma Clark-Coleman embraced a spirit of
22 bipartisanship and, in her farewell speech, mentioned many shared
23 memories, happy and sad, with colleagues from both sides of the
24 aisle. Perhaps the most memorable moment from her time in the
25 Legislature was when she brought the Four Tops - two of whom were
26 her high school classmates - to the Senate floor to celebrate their
27 50th year together. Clearly Irma Clark-Coleman created strong
28 connections with her fellow Senators; and

29 Whereas, Following her service in the Legislature, Irma Clark-

1 Coleman returned to Wayne County government. She was elected to the
2 Wayne County Board of Commissioners in 2010, a position she held
3 until her passing. As of 2025, she was serving as chair of the
4 Commission's Committee on Public Safety, Judiciary and Homeland
5 Security and the Wayne County Community Corrections Advisory Board;
6 and

7 Whereas, Throughout her lifetime, Irma Clark-Coleman was
8 involved in numerous organizations and received a multitude of
9 awards for her service to the people of Michigan. She was a life
10 member of the NAACP, served on the board of directors for the
11 Travelers Aid Society, and was the co-chair of the Detroit
12 Goodfellows Drive. She was also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha
13 Sorority, Inc., an organization she honored with a resolution on
14 their centennial anniversary. While she volunteered with too many
15 organizations to list, these also included the United Way, the
16 National Association of Black County Officials, the National
17 Alliance of Black School Educators, the Civic Center Optimist Club,
18 and the Detroit Works Partnership. Irma Clark-Coleman received the
19 Spirit of Detroit Award from the City of Detroit, a Distinguished
20 Service Award from the Wayne County Clerk, and the 2005 Legislator
21 of the Year Award from the Michigan Association of School Social
22 Workers; and

23 Whereas, We offer our sincere condolences to Irma Clark-
24 Coleman's family as they mourn her passing. Wayne County and the
25 state of Michigan have lost an exemplary leader and public servant,
26 but Irma Clark-Coleman's legacy will live on for years to come;
27 now, therefore, be it

28 Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives
29 concurring), That we offer this expression of our highest tribute

1 to honor the memory of Irma Clark-Coleman, a member of the House of
2 Representatives from 1999 to 2002 and the Senate from 2003 to 2010;
3 and be it further

4 Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the
5 Clark-Coleman family as evidence of our lasting esteem for her
6 memory.