

20102407D

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 168

Offered February 25, 2020

Commending Rita D. Bishop.

Patrons—Edwards, Barker, Bell, Boysko, Chafin, Chase, Cosgrove, Deeds, Dunnavant, Ebbin, Favola, Hashmi, Howell, Kiggans, Lewis, Locke, Lucas, Marsden, Mason, McClellan, McPike, Morrissey, Newman, Norment, Obenshain, Peake, Petersen, Pillion, Reeves, Saslaw, Spruill, Stanley, Surovell and Vogel; Delegates: Adams, D.M., Austin, Cole, M.L., Delaney, Head, Heretick, Hope, Hurst, Rasoul and Ware

WHEREAS, Rita D. Bishop, dedicated educator and superintendent of Roanoke City Public Schools over the past decade, is retiring in 2020; and

WHEREAS, beginning her career as an English teacher in the 1960s, Rita Bishop also worked as a counselor, vice principal, and principal before joining the central administration office in San Jose, California; and

WHEREAS, from the mid-1990s to 2004, Rita Bishop became familiar with Roanoke and its school division as vice superintendent of Roanoke City Public Schools; after a brief stint as a superintendent in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Rita Bishop returned to Roanoke in 2007, where she has served as superintendent ever since; and

WHEREAS, over Rita Bishop's tenure, Roanoke City Public Schools underwent a remarkable transformation, with innovative programs and unconventional approaches resulting in higher graduation rates, better school performance, and greater equity across the division; and

WHEREAS, one of Rita Bishop's first accomplishments was the establishment of Forest Park Academy, a school designed to help students who had dropped out or fallen behind on credits finish their education; since the program began in 2008, it has produced more than 1,000 graduates and helped increase the division-wide graduation rate from below 60 percent to over 90 percent; and

WHEREAS, Rita Bishop was also instrumental in the creation of RCPS+, a summer enrichment program designed to help the transition between school years and improve learning outcomes; in 2019, over 3,400 students enrolled, a record for the program; and

WHEREAS, in 2009, Rita Bishop advocated for the adoption of an equity policy which has helped narrow the division's achievement gap and ensured that every student in Roanoke City Public Schools has the opportunity to succeed; and

WHEREAS, recent initiatives spearheaded by Rita Bishop have aimed to make the schools of Roanoke City safer and the division's employees more informed of the effects trauma has on many of their students, fostering a more welcoming and encouraging learning environment; and

WHEREAS, when Rita Bishop took over as superintendent in 2007, eight schools in Roanoke lacked accreditation; after years of persistence, Roanoke City Public Schools reached full accreditation for the first time in the division's history in 2018, a feat it accomplished again in 2019, a testament to the impact Rita Bishop has had on the school system; and

WHEREAS, for her countless accomplishments as an educator, Rita Bishop has received many awards, including recognition from the Virginia Association of School Superintendents as Virginia Superintendent of the Year in 2013; and

WHEREAS, Rita Bishop has touched thousands of students' lives over her career and helped make Roanoke a wonderful place to live and learn; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Rita D. Bishop, superintendent of Roanoke City Public Schools and leader in her community, on the occasion of her retirement; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Rita D. Bishop as an expression of the General Assembly's profound respect and wholehearted admiration for her contributions to Roanoke and the Commonwealth.

INTRODUCED

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