

2023 -- H 6532

LC003235

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

HOUSE RESOLUTION

EXTENDING DEEPEST CONDOLENCES ON THE PASSING OF MATTIE L. SMITH

Introduced By: Representatives Batista, Shekarchi, Blazejewski, Chippendale,
Costantino, Vella-Wilkinson, Kennedy, and Felix

Date Introduced: June 15, 2023

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, It is with sadness that this House has learned of the passing of Mattie Smith,
2 the loving mother of five, and Co-Founder of Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE), and
3 Chairperson of organizing group WAGE; and

4 WHEREAS, Mattie Smith was born in Spartanburg, South Carolina, one of eleven
5 indigenous children in her family. In the early 1960s, she and her five children moved to the City
6 of Providence; and

7 WHEREAS, Ms. Smith was permanently disabled at her workplace which led to what
8 would become a life of activism helping others, predominantly low-income women, to join
9 together for direct action and real change; and

10 WHEREAS, In 1982, with a deep desire to give back to her community and an intimate
11 knowledge of the community's needs, Ms. Smith joined the Worker's Association For Guaranteed
12 Employment (WAGE), a welfare rights organization, where she quickly became a key leader,
13 spokesperson, and board member. One of her greatest successes at WAGE was her role in
14 organizing a 1,000 person protest at the State House that ultimately resulted in the first state-
15 funded shelter for homeless residents; and

16 WHEREAS, Taking her abilities and knowledge to the next level, Ms. Smith Co-
17 Founded Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE) in 1986, with no start-up funding, no
18 connection with established local groups, no big-name supporters on the Board, and a first-year
19 budget of \$2,500; and

20 WHEREAS, DARE, under the leadership of Ms. Smith, has vastly benefitted the lives of

1 many Rhode Islanders through improvements in the State's homeless shelters, playgrounds, and
2 provisions requiring dental care for working adults on Medicaid; and

3 WHEREAS, During Ms. Smith's tenure at DARE, she led a campaign to force the City to
4 clean up vacant lots and transform them into playgrounds, one of which was later named in her
5 honor, and got the first tennis court built in South Providence. She also led the campaign to make
6 Rhode Island the second state to adopt a PIPP–Percentage of Income Payment Plan, with
7 Arrearage Forgiveness, to name but a few of the group's many improvements for the community;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, Ms. Smith was a driving force for WAGE, a long-time Board member and
10 lifelong member of DARE, a Jefferson Award winner, and a loving mother, grandmother, great-
11 grandmother, and great-great-grandmother, who will be dearly remembered as the powerful,
12 beloved force that helped her community in so many ways; now, therefore be it

13 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby
14 extends deepest sympathy and condolences on the passing of Mattie L. Smith; and be it further

15 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
16 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Sabrina Smith and Family.

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