MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE        REGULAR SESSION 2021

By:  Senator(s) Simmons (12th), Jackson (11th), Simmons (13th), Jordan, Barnett, Butler, Jackson (32nd), Thomas, Blackmon, Turner-Ford, Horhn, Frazier, Witherspoon

To:  Rules

SENATE RESOLUTION NO.  23

A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE DEEPEST SYMPATHY OF THE MISSISSIPPI SENATE TO THE SURVIVING FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF GREENVILLE, MISSISSIPPI, NATIVE MARY WILSON, CO-FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE LEGENDARY MOTOWN GROUP "THE SUPREMES," AND COMMENDING HER MUSICAL LEGACY.

WHEREAS, she was a Motown legend, bestselling author, music activist, former U.S. cultural ambassador and co-founding member of "The Supremes." Greenville, Mississippi, native Mary Wilson, best known as the longest-running member of the group that she made famous, alongside Diana Ross and Florence Ballard, and later, Cindy Birdsong, passed away on February 8, 2021, at her home in Henderson, Nevada. She was 76; and

WHEREAS, as we recognize Black History Month, we honor an original/founding member of The Supremes, who changed the face of pop music to become a trendsetter. The Supremes broke down social, racial, and gender barriers, which all started with the wild success of their first number-one song. Formed in Detroit as The Primettes in 1959, The Supremes were Motown's most successful act of the 1960s, scoring 12 No. 1 singles. They also continue to
reign as America's most successful vocal group to date. Their influence not only carries on in contemporary R&B, soul and pop, they also helped pave the way for mainstream success by Black artists across all genres; and

WHEREAS, Mary achieved an unprecedented 12 number-one hits with five of them being consecutive from 1964-1965. Those songs are "Where Did Our Love Go," "Baby Love," "Come See About Me," "Stop! In the Name of Love" and "Back in My Arms Again" according to Billboard Magazine. In 2018, Billboard Magazine celebrated the 60th anniversary of Motown with a list of "The Hot 100's Top Artists of All Time," where The Supremes ranked at number 16 and still remain the number-1 female-recording group of all time; and

WHEREAS, January 21, 2021, marked the 60th anniversary of the day The Supremes signed with Motown in 1961. Mary was leading the celebration of the 60th anniversary of The Supremes; and

WHEREAS, the singer's story began on March 6, 1944, in Greenville, Mississippi, where she was the eldest of three children born to Sam and Johnnie Mae Wilson. The family would relocate to Detroit's Brewster-Douglass Projects in the 1950s, where Wilson first met future fellow Supreme, Ballard, in elementary school. The two would eventually join forces with Diana Ross and high school friend Betty McGlown to form the singing group "The Primettes," so named for the male singing group then-led by Eddie Kendricks named the "Primes." Barbara Martin replaced McGlown in 1960, and the quartet became focused on
getting signed by the then-upstart label Motown. They were initially turned down by Berry Gordy, an anecdote Wilson recounted when sharing the story of the group's eventual signing; and

WHEREAS, rebranded as The Supremes, the group released several singles in the next few years, but with little success. Martin would ultimately leave the group to begin a family in early 1962, just before the remaining trio would be paired with the hit-making songwriting team of Holland-Dozier-Holland (Lamont Dozier and brothers Brian and Eddie Holland), who helped Wilson, Ballard and Ross score their first chart hit in late 1963 with "When the Lovelight Starts Shining Through His Eyes," which peaked at 23 on the Billboard pop chart; and

WHEREAS, the following year brought The Supremes their first No. 1 hit with the now-classic "Where Did Our Love Go," released in August 1964. That hit would also bring the trio international fame, as it reached No. 3 in the U.K. The hit would prove a breakthrough, as a string of No. 1 hits followed, including "Baby Love," "Come See About Me," "Stop! In the Name of Love" and "Back in My Arms Again," followed, cementing The Supremes' stardom with five consecutive No. 1 hits on the Billboard charts, the first group in history to do so, and it would be the first of many records broken by the original trio, who, with 12 number-one hits on the Billboard Hot 100, still holds the record for the most No. 1 hits among American groups, including hits like "I Hear a Symphony," and "You Can't Hurry Love." The consistent triumphs
would make The Supremes one of the best-selling girl groups of all time; and

WHEREAS, Mary's best known post-Supremes success would come via the bestselling *Dreamgirl: My Life as a Supreme*, the first of several books she co-authored. *Dreamgirl* was followed by the memoir *Supreme Faith: Someday We'll Be Together* (1990), and 2019's *Supreme Glamour*, a book about the group's style. In 2019, Wilson also briefly appeared as a contestant on *Dancing With the Stars*. As of 2021, she was still teasing new projects via her YouTube channel; and

WHEREAS, Wilson is preceded in death by her son, Rafael. She is survived by her sons, Pedro, Jr., and Willie; daughter, Turkessa; 10 grandchildren and one great-grandchild; and

WHEREAS, as the world awakened to the news of Wilson's passing, tributes poured in. Motown Records founder Berry Gordy was among the first to recognize one of his label's biggest success stories: "I was extremely shocked and saddened to hear of the passing of a major member of the Motown family, Mary Wilson of the Supremes. The Supremes were always known as the 'sweethearts of Motown.' She was quite a star in her own right and over the years continued to work hard to boost the legacy of the Supremes. Mary Wilson was a trailblazer, and will be deeply missed":

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby express the deepest sympathy of the Mississippi Senate to the surviving family and friends of
Greenville, Mississippi, native Mary Wilson, co-founding member of
the legendary Motown group "The Supremes," and commend her musical
legacy.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
Mary Wilson's surviving family, forwarded to the Mississippi Arts
Commission and be made available to the Capitol Press Corps.