

House Resolution 488

By: Representatives Greene of the 154th, Taylor of the 173rd, Yearta of the 152nd, Campbell of the 171st, Williams of the 148th, and others

A RESOLUTION

- 1 Commending the Southwest Georgia Area Health Education Center; and for other purposes.
- 2 WHEREAS, the Southwest Georgia Area Health Education Center (SOWEGA-AHEC) is
3 a nonprofit organization whose mission is to increase access to healthcare by improving the
4 number and equitable distribution of healthcare providers across 38 counties in southwest
5 Georgia; and
- 6 WHEREAS, the vision of SOWEGA-AHEC is to cultivate a healthcare workforce that
7 closely reflects the state's population in diversity, ensuring communities have an adequate
8 number of practitioners in key disciplines, particularly primary care, to improve access to
9 healthcare; and
- 10 WHEREAS, under the leadership of Chairman Dr. Winston Price, Executive Director Laura
11 Calhoun, Administrator Zina Whittaker, and Board Member and Co-Founder Dr. James
12 Hotz, SOWEGA-AHEC has exceeded its goals year after year; and
- 13 WHEREAS, Zina Whittaker dedicated 25 years of service to SOWEGA-AHEC before her
14 retirement, Dr. James Hotz served for 34 years before transitioning to Emeritus status, and
15 Dr. Winston Price served for nine years before moving to Emeritus status; and

16 WHEREAS, despite the challenges of a global pandemic, major structural damage to its
17 headquarters necessitating temporary relocation of operations, and a statewide shortage of
18 available housing for students on rotation, the number of students successfully placed on
19 clinical clerkships continued to grow; and

20 WHEREAS, in 2024, SOWEGA-AHEC engaged more than 5,800 participants, recruited
21 3,898 students, and facilitated the retention of 1,266 healthcare providers in southwest
22 Georgia communities; and

23 WHEREAS, SOWEGA-AHEC conducted more than 2,000 classroom presentations through
24 its AHEC Scholars IPE program, Pathway to Med School, high school camps, and health
25 professional facility shadowing experiences in 2024; and

26 WHEREAS, since 2022, SOWEGA-AHEC has coordinated a highly successful Community
27 Paramedicine Program in Clinch Memorial Hospital, Coffee Regional Medical Center,
28 Colquitt Regional Medical Center, Irwin County Hospital, and Southwell, enhancing
29 community wellness, reducing hospital readmissions, and minimizing patient use of
30 emergency departments for chronic and non-emergent cases; and

31 WHEREAS, the SOWEGA-AHEC RN Reentry Program, which has been active since 2007,
32 has played a critical role in strengthening the healthcare workforce over the past nine years,
33 ensuring that the state could meet the demands of first responders during the global pandemic
34 and beyond.

35 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
36 the members of this body commend the Southwest Georgia Area Health Education Center
37 for its outstanding contributions to healthcare workforce development and its continued

38 efforts to improve access to healthcare across southwest Georgia as well as extend best
39 wishes for continued success.

40 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
41 and directed to make an appropriate copy of this resolution available for distribution to the
42 Southwest Georgia Area Health Education Center.