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**TO:** COUNCIL MEMBERS

**FROM:** David Whitaker, Director  
Legislative Policy Division Staff

**DATE:** July 16, 2021

**RE: TESTIMONIAL RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE THE RETIREMENT OF  
DETROIT REPERTORY THEATRE FOUNDERS BRUCE MILLAN & BARBARA  
BUSBY AFTER 64 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Council President Brenda Jones requested that the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) draft a resolution in honor of Detroit Repertory Theatre founders, Bruce Millan and Barbara Busby, upon their retirement after 64 years of dedicated service.

Attached, please find our draft of the aforementioned resolution.

Please contact us if we can be of any further assistance.

**RESOLUTION BY COUNCIL PRESIDENT BRENDA JONES**

**TESTIMONIAL RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE THE RETIREMENT OF DETROIT REPERTORY THEATRE FOUNDERS BRUCE MILLAN & BARBARA BUSBY AFTER 64 YEARS OF SERVICE**

**WHEREAS,** After serving with distinction for 64 years, Detroit Repertory Theatre founders Bruce Millan the longest-serving artistic director of a professional theater company in the country and Barbara Busby who has overseen the theater's operations as its fiscal officer have retired; and

**WHEREAS,** The Bruce Millan and Barbara Busby have made a name for themselves and the Detroit Repertory Theatre, through their institution of a race-transcendent casting policy: The best actor for the job got it, regardless of their skin color. This courageous and trailblazing stance has garnered them both accolades and criticism over the years; and

**WHEREAS,** In 1957, while students at Wayne State University, Millan and Busby assembled a company of Black and white actors and launched Millan Theatre Company, a touring group presenting children's theater. He wrote, she acted, and they both directed the plays that toured metro Detroit, Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania; and

**WHEREAS,** After touring for four years, they moved the theater to its longtime home in central Detroit at 13103 Woodrow Wilson and Buena Vista streets and began operating as the Detroit Repertory Theatre, shifting to theatrical productions for adults; and

**WHEREAS,** Under their leadership, the theater created many outreach programs including "Neighborhood Nights," the Free Actors Workshop, the Cultural Fellowship program, the New Playwrights Program and the Charitable Group Fundraiser program. Through decades of difficulties in the city, the pair would forgo salary for themselves to keep the theater going. He was always behind the bar serving customers, and she was the box office manager for every single performance from the beginning until March 2020; and

**WHEREAS,** The pair have been honored by the state of Michigan, the Detroit City Council, the Office of Wayne County Executive, city of Detroit, the Michigan Council for the Arts and U.S. Senators Donald W. Riegle Jr. and Carl Levin. In addition, they received awards for their innovative programs, community service and theater excellence from groups including Howard University Alumni; the Interfaith Leadership Council of Southeast Michigan and Kennedy Center for the Arts; and;

**WHEREAS,** Among their awards are the Governor's Arts Award, the Michigan Coalition for Human Rights Community Service Award, The Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy

Award, the Rosetta LeNoire Award from the Actors Equity Association and an award of recognition from the Union for Professional Actors and Stage managers, for "commitment to exemplary artistic standards, non-traditional casting, and numerous outreach and education initiatives;" **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** The Detroit City Council hereby salutes Bruce Millan and Barbara Busby for their 64 years of outstanding service in the city of Detroit and for their benefit to the field of theater and race relations in the city. After the 64 years of legendary service of such a dynamic, dedicated and gifted duo, the Detroit City Council also wishes Bruce Millan and Barbara Busby a well-deserved restful, prosperous and blissful retirement.

July 16, 2021