

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 413

WHEREAS, Supporters of Incarnate Word Academy in Brownsville are gathering on June 3, 2023, to celebrate a legacy of service that has spanned 170 years; and

WHEREAS, One of the first schools in the Rio Grande Valley, the academy was founded by four sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament; they traveled to Brownsville from Lyon, France, at the behest of the first Catholic bishop of Texas, the Most Reverend Jean M. Odin; the French-speaking sisters, Claire Valentine, Ange Barré, Ephrem Satin, and Dominique Ravier, spent a few months in Galveston learning English and Spanish before proceeding to their new home; in order to provide textbooks to their pupils, they purchased a used printing press; and

WHEREAS, The school rented a small, four-room frame house before moving to Fronton Street at the end of 1853; students hailed from Brownsville, other cities in the Rio Grande Valley, and Matamoros, Mexico; the sisters faced many challenges, from yellow fever epidemics to bandit raids; in 1867, a hurricane all but demolished the building, and the school was nearly forced to close, but the local community and Bishop Claude Dubois came together to raise funds for a new convent and school, built on East Saint Charles Street; and

WHEREAS, By 1885, high school instruction became available at Incarnate Word; the new Villa Maria High School was completed on Jefferson Street in 1926; growth continued in subsequent decades, and in the 1960s, elementary instruction moved to buildings on Resaca Boulevard, purchased from the former

Harlingen Air Force Base and renovated; a new high school was built on the Resaca campus in 1971, while the junior high transferred to the old Villa Maria facility; and

WHEREAS, Villa Maria High School closed in the early 1990s; Incarnate Word Academy then served elementary and middle school students at the Villa Maria campus, while the old IWA barracks became home to the new Villa Maria Language Institute; in order to invest in much-needed updates and improvements, the sisters sold much of their property to the neighboring hospital; and

WHEREAS, The new century has brought many changes to the education landscape, and Incarnate Word Academy is set to close at the end of the 2022-2023 school year; while marking the end of an era, members of its community may reflect on the important role the school has played in the Rio Grande Valley and celebrate the unyielding faith and dedication of the sisters who provided generations of young Texans with a strong foundation on which to build their lives; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 88th Legislature, hereby honor the legacy of Incarnate Word Academy in Brownsville and recognize all who those who have contributed to this historic institution.

LaMantia

President of the Senate

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Senate on April 13, 2023.

Secretary of the Senate

Member, Texas Senate