

By: Johnson of Dallas

H.R. No. 629

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, Family and friends are mourning the loss of Serena
2 Simmons Connelly of Farmers Branch, a lifelong champion for the
3 most vulnerable members of society, who passed away on April 22,
4 2020, at the age of 50; and

5 WHEREAS, The daughter of Harold and Sandra Simmons, the
6 former Serena Simmons was born in Houston on January 18, 1970; she
7 graduated at the top of her class at Greenhill School, and she
8 received a bachelor's degree in classical studies from Brown
9 University and a master's degree in social work from The University
10 of Texas at Arlington in 1995; and

11 WHEREAS, Admired for her quiet strength and visionary
12 leadership, Ms. Connelly launched her career as an advocate for HIV
13 and AIDS patients in Dallas; subsequently, she worked in behalf of
14 the city's refugee community and established the Human Rights
15 Initiative of North Texas, an organization that provides free legal
16 services to people who have suffered human rights abuses; she later
17 served as director of philanthropy for the Harold Simmons
18 Foundation; she believed strongly in the power of philanthropy to
19 drive systemic change, and her passion for early childhood
20 learning, criminal justice reform, gender equity, and quality
21 medical and mental health care for all shaped the foundation's
22 efforts; and

23 WHEREAS, Ms. Connelly tirelessly supported the advancement
24 of many other important initiatives as well, such as

1 trauma-informed therapy and Montessori education, and she
2 advocated for immigrant rights and those living in poverty;
3 moreover, she gave of her own resources to Educational First Steps,
4 Equal Justice USA, and Physicians for Human Rights, among others;
5 in recognition of her contributions, which also included service to
6 a number of boards and foundations, she received the 2014
7 Distinguished Alumni Award from UT Arlington and was named the 2001
8 Social Worker of the Year by the National Association of Social
9 Workers Texas Chapter; and

10 WHEREAS, In all her endeavors, Ms. Connelly enjoyed the love
11 and support of her husband, Tom Connelly, and their two children;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, Through her exceptional dedication to social
14 justice, Serena Connelly made a positive and lasting difference in
15 the world around her, and she leaves behind a record of service that
16 her loved ones can remember with pride; now, therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 87th Texas
18 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life of Serena Simmons
19 Connelly and extend sincere condolences to all those who mourn her
20 passing; and, be it further

21 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
22 prepared for her family and that when the Texas House of
23 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Serena
24 Simmons Connelly.