

STATE OF NEW YORK
LEGISLATURE OF ERIE COUNTY

BUFFALO, NY, MARCH 23, 2017

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***In Honor of Renowned Conservationist and
Buffalo Zoo Leader Dr. Donna M. Fernandes
Erie County Legislature Citizen of the Month for March 2017***

I HEREBY CERTIFY, that at the regular session of the Legislature of Erie County, held in the Legislative Chambers of Old County Hall, in the City of Buffalo, on the 23rd day of March, 2017, a resolution was adopted, of which the following is a true copy:

WHEREAS, it is the sense of the Erie County Legislature to honor and pay tribute to individuals that enrich their communities, and attendant to such concern and in full accord with its long-standing tradition, this Legislative Body is justly proud to honor and recognize **DR. DONNA M. FERNANDES**; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Fernandes served as the first woman president of the Buffalo Zoo since its opening 142 years ago, and has built a distinguished career both during and prior to her contributions here in Western New York; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Fernandes' exceptional educational background coupled with extensive experience in zoo management and science education made her the right leader for the Buffalo Zoo. Her education first began at Phillips Andover Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, followed by receiving her Bachelor's Degree from Brown University, a Master's and Doctoral Degree from Princeton University, and an additional Master's Degree from the Simmons School of Management; and

WHEREAS, prior to joining the Buffalo Zoo, Dr. Fernandes spent a year in postdoctoral study at the University of Liverpool and obtained her first job as Curator of Research at the Franklin Park Zoo. Dr. Fernandes' next role began in 1996 where she worked for the Wildlife Conservation Society in New York City as Curator of Animals and Education at Prospect Park Wildlife Center, and also served as Senior Zoologist for leading exhibit design firm Joseph A. Wetzel Associates; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Fernandes has utilized her experience and education to pass down her knowledge to others, serving as the Resident Animal Expert on NPR's *Living on Earth* while working at Prospect Park Wildlife Center, and also hosting an interactive TV series for middle school students focused on insects and other anthropoids; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Fernandes' success would culminate with her appointment as President and CEO of the Buffalo Zoo in 2000, leading the Zoo in becoming one of the premier zoos in the United States, as evidenced by being one of the select group to earn accreditation from the prestigious Association of Zoos and Aquariums; and

WHEREAS, having secured the Association of Zoos and Aquariums accreditation, the Buffalo Zoo is one of 230 institutions globally that meet the highest standards in animal care while promoting fun, safe, and educational environments. The accreditation allows the Zoo to breed endangered species and be eligible for select funding, with fewer than 10% of the USDA-licensed wildlife exhibitors in the U.S. having received this accreditation; and

WHEREAS, at the onset of Dr. Fernandes' tenure, the Buffalo Zoo undertook a rebuilding of its urban facility to create a zoo with exciting exhibits coupled with conservation education for visitors. Over the last decade under Dr. Fernandes' leadership, the Zoo was able to raise and secure \$50 million in capital funds for zoo revitalization projects, including the opening of several major exhibits including *Vanishing Animals*, *EcoStation*, *Otter Creek*, *Sea Lion Cove*, *M&T Bank Rainforest Falls*, *the Delta Sonic Heritage Farm*, *Arctic Edge*, and a new entry complex; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Fernandes' leadership has set the stage for expansion plans to continue in the future, with the next phase of the Zoo's revitalization being a \$2.5 million renovation of the historic Amphibian and Reptile House with state-of-the-art exhibits; and

WHEREAS, under Dr. Fernandes' stewardship, the Buffalo Zoo has posted its highest attendance in decades, attracting 538,100 visitors in 2016 and increasing its income by \$110,000; and

WHEREAS, because of Dr. Fernandes, the Buffalo Zoo's vision of being a regional leader in inspiring visitors and protecting natural habitats has become a reality; and

WHEREAS, the Erie County Legislature's Citizen of the Month Award was established to recognize individuals who have achieved great heights in their professions, have retired from distinguished careers, have demonstrated excellence, or have made extraordinary contributions to the quality of life in Erie County; and

WHEREAS, it is clear that Dr. Fernandes was the instrumental and vital figure in making the Buffalo Zoo one of the most treasured community assets in our region; and this Honorable Body and Erie County express our gratitude for her contributions to our community and wish her a relaxing and well-deserved retirement.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Erie County Legislature hereby goes on record to recognize **DR. DONNA M. FERNANDES** as **CITIZEN OF THE MONTH** for March, 2017 and applaud and thank her for her dedicated fighting on behalf of the Buffalo Zoo as its President and CEO to make it one of the country's best and a cornerstone of our community.

Hon. Peter J. Savage III
Erie County Legislator, 3rd District

Karen M. McCarthy
Clerk of the Erie County Legislature