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HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 397

Offered March 11, 2026

*Celebrating the life of Abby L. Block.*

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WHEREAS, Abby L. Block, an esteemed public servant who improved health care and benefits for millions of Americans over the course of her distinguished career in federal health policy and administration, died in 2025; and

WHEREAS, Abby Block's father, Irving Barbanell, had been an insurance salesman who worked door-to-door during the Great Depression, a background that gave her early insights into the value of financial security and affordable insurance; and

WHEREAS, after receiving a master's degree in social work from Columbia University in the early 1960s, Abby Block began her career working with underprivileged youth in New York City, helping young people in inner-city neighborhoods understand the dangers of drug abuse and addiction; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the need for strong leadership in public administration, Abby Block later returned to Columbia University to earn a master's degree in business administration, preparing for leadership roles in federal government at a time when few women held such positions; and

WHEREAS, Abby Block subsequently joined the Presidential Management Intern Program, a highly selective program for emerging federal leaders, and began her distinguished service in public administration; and

WHEREAS, from 1979 to 2004, Abby Block served in the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), where she became the nation's foremost expert on the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP), which provides health coverage to millions of federal employees, retirees, and their families; and

WHEREAS, during her 25-year tenure at OPM, Abby Block modernized and strengthened the FEHBP, ensuring it continued to provide affordable, high-quality health care options while becoming a model for other public and private health insurance systems; and

WHEREAS, Abby Block was the principal architect of several landmark government-wide benefit initiatives, including the Flexible Spending Accounts Program, the Long Term Care Insurance Program, and the Patients' Bill of Rights, each of which expanded options and protections for federal employees and their families; and

WHEREAS, widely respected for her expertise, Abby Block frequently testified before the United States Congress and advised leaders across multiple presidential administrations, earning numerous accolades, including OPM's Theodore Roosevelt Award for Distinguished Career Service, one of the agency's highest recognitions for excellence in public service; and

WHEREAS, in 2004, Abby Block joined the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services as Director of the Center for Beneficiary Choices, where she worked tirelessly to implement the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit, one of the largest and most complex new federal health programs in American history; and

WHEREAS, Abby Block was deeply respected by colleagues and industry leaders for her fairness, pragmatism, and expertise, exemplifying the highest traditions of nonpartisan public service; and

WHEREAS, Abby Block's lifelong dedication to improving the delivery of health care and benefits for federal employees, retirees, and Medicare beneficiaries left a lasting legacy of competence, compassion, and integrity in public service; and

WHEREAS, Abby Block will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by numerous family members, friends, and people whose lives she touched through her leadership and advocacy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Delegates hereby note with great sadness the loss of Abby L. Block, a respected leader in health care policy and administration; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Abby L. Block as an expression of the House of Delegates' respect for her memory.

INTRODUCED

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