

Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Board Member

**SUBJECT:           REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION NO. 20-014 OF  
THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA,  
RECOGNIZING MARILYN HOLIFIELD, ESQ.**

**COMMITTEE:       ACADEMICS, INNOVATIONS, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC  
BLUEPRINT:       RELEVANT, RIGOROUS AND INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS**

Ms. Marilyn Holifield was born in Tallahassee, Florida, to Bishop and Millicent Holifield, Sr. Her quiet burning spirit inspired her to challenge doors closed by Jim Crow laws and Old South traditions. Her curiosity and belief in equality motivated her to be one of the first three black students to enter Tallahassee's all-white public high school. Undeterred by racial hatred, daily verbal abuse and isolation, her optimism and family's encouragement fueled her desire to explore broader experiences Up North offered by Quaker-influenced Swarthmore College. The collective memoir, *Seven Sisters and a Brother: Friendship, Resistance and Untold Truths About Black Student Activism in the 1960s*, coauthored by Marilyn Holifield and her seven college schoolmates tells a compelling story about their dramatic push for diversity and inclusion at Swarthmore College.

Ms. Holifield's story reveals persistence at Swarthmore College and beyond to lift invisibility from excluded histories, cultures and voices to transform the status quo. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics and an inaugural Concentration in Black Studies from Swarthmore College. After graduating from Harvard Law School, she joined the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund to enforce recently enacted Civil Rights laws.

Ms. Holifield's unrelenting determination prompted her to enter doors closed by white collar traditions of corporate America and join Holland & Knight, an international law firm that traces its Florida origins to the 1890s. At Holland & Knight, she was its first black attorney and became the first black female partner at a major law firm in Florida. Ms. Holifield has received numerous awards for public service and contributions to the legal profession, including the Chesterfield Smith Award, Holland & Knight's highest honor, National Bar Association Gertrude Rush Award, Anti-Defamation League Jurisprudence Award and the Dade County Bar Association David Dyer Award.

Ms. Holifield is a Senior Partner at Holland & Knight. She serves on governing boards of Harvard University, Swarthmore College and University of Miami. She is cofounder of the Miami Museum of Contemporary Art of the African Diaspora, Miami MoCAAD, which seeks to create a premier museum to showcase contemporary art of the Diaspora and blend technology and art to modernize the museum experience and inspire curiosity about contemporary art of the African Diaspora.

**Replacement  
B-8**

**ACTION PROPOSED BY  
DR. DOROTHY BENDROSS-MINDINGALL:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 20-014 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognizing Marilyn Holifield, Esq.

**RESOLUTION NO. 20-014  
OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA,  
RECOGNIZING MARILYN HOLIFIELD, ESQ.**

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Marilyn Holifield was born in Tallahassee, Florida, to Bishop and Millicent Holifield, Sr. Her quiet burning spirit inspired her to challenge doors closed by Jim Crow laws and Old South traditions. Her curiosity and belief in equality motivated her to be one of the first three black students to enter Tallahassee's all-white public high school. Undeterred by racial hatred, daily verbal abuse and isolation, her optimism and family's encouragement fueled her desire to explore broader experiences Up North offered by Quaker-influenced Swarthmore College. The collective memoir, *Seven Sisters and a Brother: Friendship, Resistance and Untold Truths About Black Student Activism in the 1960s*, coauthored by Ms. Holifield and her seven college schoolmates tells a compelling story about their dramatic push for diversity and inclusion at Swarthmore College; and

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Holifield's story reveals persistence at Swarthmore College and beyond to lift invisibility from excluded histories, cultures and voices to transform the status quo. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics and an inaugural Concentration in Black Studies from Swarthmore College. After graduating from Harvard Law School, she joined the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund to enforce recently enacted Civil Rights laws; and

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Holifield's unrelenting determination prompted her to enter doors closed by white collar traditions of corporate America and join Holland & Knight, an international law firm that traces its Florida origins to the 1890s. At Holland & Knight, she was its first black attorney and became the first black female partner at a major law firm in Florida. Marilyn has received numerous awards for public service and contributions to the legal profession, including the Chesterfield Smith Award, Holland & Knight's highest honor, National Bar Association Gertrude Rush Award, Anti-Defamation League Jurisprudence Award and the Dade County Bar Association David Dyer Award; and

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Holifield is a Senior Partner at Holland & Knight. She serves on governing boards of Harvard University, Swarthmore College and University of Miami. She is cofounder of the Miami Museum of Contemporary Art of the African Diaspora, Miami MoCAAD, which seeks to create a premier museum to showcase contemporary art of the Diaspora and blend technology and art to modernize the museum experience and inspire curiosity about contemporary art of the African Diaspora.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 20-014 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognizing Marilyn Holifield, Esq., as a Trailblazer for women, especially black women lawyers.

A copy of this resolution is placed in the permanent records of this Board.

**Presented this eighteenth day of March, A.D. 2020**

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

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CHAIR

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary