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House of Representatives

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Mr. Speaker, I rise today during Black History Month to celebrate a change agent and one of Tampa Bay's most distinguished torch bearers, Marcus Brooks.

Mr. Brooks is a fourth-generation resident of St. Petersburg, Florida, where he currently lives with his wife and children. He received his bachelor's degree in political science with a minor in communications from Florida State University. Brooks credits his upbringing of racial contrast in Clearwater, Florida and South St. Petersburg, which afforded him different perspectives to shape him into the leader he is today. He is also a recipient of the St. Petersburg NAACP's Next-Gen Trailblazer award and currently serves on the boards of the St. Petersburg Downtown Partnership and Allegany Franciscan Ministries.

"Whatever gifts you are believed to have are not yours. They were gifted to you for a finite amount of time to be passed on and used in service of others." These are words Mr. Brooks uses to govern his work and daily life. After graduating from Florida State University, he began his journey in public service of more than 15 years. Mr. Brooks has served as the youth coordinator for Coordinated Childcare of Pinellas, development officer at St. Petersburg College, regional director of Junior Achievement of Tampa Bay, director of development for Eckerd Youth Alternatives, to name a few. While serving in these roles, his goal was to cultivate, plan and execute developmental efforts that would change and touch the lives of our youth through education.

Mr. Brooks is an advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion, and believes unequivocally that if we advance racial equity and improve the overall health of the community, we will see the growth of more sustainable communities. Mr. Brooks is the executive director of the Center for Health Equity, whose mission is to inspire and empower people, share ideas, exchange information, organize and build relationships to end differences in health due to institutional racism. Under his leadership, the Center for Health Equity has pushed new bounds with the creation of Courageous Conversations, which is an award-winning protocol for effectively engaging, sustaining and deepening interracial dialogue. This conversation examines the impact of race in our lives and fosters the development of essential literacy and competency through which to experience our personal, professional and organizational journeys. Mr. Brooks believes that if we are able to strip

away past beliefs, experiences and actions to truly get to know our neighbor, we can begin to have a better understanding of one another.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Tampa Bay community, I am honored to recognize the outstanding accomplishments, leadership and service of Mr. Marcus Brooks, who stands as a shining example of the tremendous impact of hard work, nurturing others and service to the community to encourage others to reach their highest potential.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy Castor". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Kathy Castor
United States Representative
Florida – District 14