

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 308

Honoring the life, legacy, and memory of Pedro Pablo Zamora y Diaz, an extraordinary educator and activist, and a pioneer in the battle against the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 31, 2009

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida (for himself, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. MEEKS of New York, Mr. POLIS of Colorado, Ms. WATSON, Mrs. CAPPES, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, and Ms. LEE of California) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

RESOLUTION

Honoring the life, legacy, and memory of Pedro Pablo Zamora y Diaz, an extraordinary educator and activist, and a pioneer in the battle against the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Whereas Pedro Zamora was an internationally renowned educator and activist whose courage, selflessness, and zest for life inspired a generation of Americans to confront their fears, misconceptions, and ignorance about HIV/AIDS and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community;

Whereas Pedro Pablo Zamora y Díaz was born on February 29, 1972, on the outskirts of Havana, Cuba, and was the youngest of Hector and Zoraida Zamora's eight children;

Whereas government officials forced the Zamora family to leave Pedro's four older brothers and older sister in Cuba when the Zamora's boarded a crowded boat to the United States on May 30, 1980;

Whereas by October 1980, 125,000 Cubans had made the journey to Florida in what became known as the Mariel Boat Lift;

Whereas despite the pain of separation, the Zamora family started a new life in Hialeah, Florida;

Whereas the Zamora family was struck by tragedy five years later when Pedro's mother died from skin cancer when he was 13 years old;

Whereas in order to deal with the loss of his mother, Pedro Zamora immersed himself in academics and extracurricular activities, becoming an honor student, president of the science club, and captain of the cross-country team, and was voted "most intellectual" and "most all around" at Hialeah High School;

Whereas Pedro began having unprotected sex with multiple men at the age of 14 in an attempt to fill the void that was left by his mother's death, and to cope with the insecurity that he felt as a gay youth of color;

Whereas unbeknown to Pedro, the first Surgeon General's report on HIV/AIDS was issued to the public in 1986, around the same time that Zamora began having unprotected intercourse;

Whereas the 1986 report stated that comprehensive sex education was one of the most powerful weapons against the

emerging epidemic, and that education should begin at the lowest grade possible to provide scientifically accurate information about heterosexual and homosexual relationships and about preventing HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections;

Whereas the 1986 Surgeon General report estimated that HIV/AIDS had claimed more than 15,000 lives in the United States;

Whereas the report acknowledged that HIV/AIDS had a disproportionate effect among Latinos and Blacks, with 80 percent of all pediatric HIV/AIDS cases occurring in Latino and Black children;

Whereas Pedro Zamora donated blood at a Red Cross blood drive during his junior year of high school and received notice that his blood had tested “reactive”;

Whereas, six months later, on November 9, 1989, at the age of 17, Pedro Zamora received confirmation that he had contracted the HIV virus;

Whereas the sex education that Pedro Zamora received within his Miami school stigmatized HIV/AIDS, portrayed homosexuality as shameful, and failed to provide him and other students with a relevant, factual, and thorough understanding of HIV/AIDS and healthy relationships;

Whereas Pedro Zamora joined a Miami-based HIV/AIDS resource center called Body Positive where he met others with HIV/AIDS, educated himself about HIV/AIDS, and discovered a desire to share his newfound vision for combating ignorance about the disease;

Whereas despite his many academic accomplishments and his initial desire to go into medicine, Pedro Zamora chose to

devote his talents as a thinker and communicator to a career in AIDS education and advocacy;

Whereas Pedro Zamora began raising awareness about HIV/AIDS in his local community in South Florida, and especially within the Latino community;

Whereas after graduating from high school in 1990, Pedro began to lecture at schools from the primary to collegial level, churches, community centers, and other venues around the country, and talked about the need for evidence-based education for preventing and managing HIV/AIDS, forming healthy relationships, de-stigmatizing HIV/AIDS, and eradicating homophobia;

Whereas in mid-1993, Pedro Zamora sent his audition tape to the producers of MTV's "The Real World", and was chosen out of more than 25,000 applicants, to live in front of the camera with six other cast-mates in San Francisco for more than four months;

Whereas in 1994, Pedro Zamora's historic appearance as one of the first openly gay men of color living with HIV/AIDS on MTV's reality television series "The Real World: San Francisco" brought international attention to the realities of HIV/AIDS and LGBT issues;

Whereas Pedro Zamora became close friends with fellow housemate Judd Winick, who would later continue Zamora's work by sharing his story and speaking about HIV/AIDS at schools and other venues;

Whereas Pedro Zamora met his future partner, Sean Sasser, during the filming of "The Real World", and the two exchanged vows in a commitment ceremony on the show;

Whereas Eric Morgenthaler of The Wall Street Journal wrote a series of articles about Pedro Zamora and his AIDS education efforts, bringing him to national prominence;

Whereas Pedro Zamora also appeared on such television shows as “Geraldo” and “The Oprah Winfrey Show”;

Whereas, on November 1, 1993, Pedro Zamora spoke about living with AIDS at a Capitol Hill reception;

Whereas, on July 12, 1994, Pedro testified during a Congressional hearing on AIDS prevention and said, “What we need is the collective will to care about young people and about people with different backgrounds and make sure that one day people grow up in a world without AIDS.”;

Whereas in 1994, President Bill Clinton and then-Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala personally recognized and thanked Pedro Zamora for his leadership and work on the AIDS Action Council Board and for humanizing and personalizing those living with HIV/AIDS;

Whereas, on August 17, 1994, Pedro Zamora checked into St. Vincent’s Hospital in New York City with diagnosed toxoplasmosis, a condition which causes brain lesions that result in fatigue, headaches, and confusion;

Whereas this condition resulted because of a severely compromised immune system;

Whereas although the revolutionary antiretroviral cocktails that improve the length and quality of life of persons with HIV/AIDS were not available until 1996, monotherapies and medical treatments for symptoms were still available to HIV/AIDS patients who could pay for care;

Whereas Pedro, like many young people, was uninsured and could not finance this care;

Whereas Pedro Zamora was diagnosed with progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML), a rare and fatal viral inflammation of the brain that breaks down the electrical impulses of the nervous system;

Whereas, at the age of 22, Pedro Zamora was given three to four months to live;

Whereas with the help of President Bill Clinton, a Zamora family friend Alonso R. del Portillo, then-Attorney General Janet Reno, then-Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, and Florida Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, an agreement was reached between the United States and Cuba that would allow the admission of 20,000 Cubans per year, including Pedro Zamora's older brothers and older sister, reuniting the family for the first time in 15 years;

Whereas, on October 21, 1994, Pedro's closest friends announced that MTV created the Pedro Zamora Memorial Fund in order to pay for his medical costs and finance further AIDS research and education projects;

Whereas, on November 11, 1994, Pedro Zamora's family honored his wish to not be sustained by artificial means, and withdrew life support;

Whereas surrounded by his family, friends, and partner Sean Sasser, Pedro Zamora died on November 11, 1994, at 4:40 a.m., the day after the final episode of "The Real World: San Francisco" aired;

Whereas Pedro Zamora was buried on November 13, 1994, at Vista Memorial Gardens in Miami Lakes, Florida;

Whereas several Pedro Zamora memorial funds and fellowships have since been established around the country to

continue his mission of breaking down the barriers of race and sexuality to raise HIV/AIDS awareness; and

Whereas “Pedro”, a movie directed by Nick Oceano and written by Dustin Lance Black, dramatizes the life and legacy of Pedro Zamora: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) honors the life, legacy, and memory of
3 Pedro Pablo Zamora y Díaz, an extraordinary edu-
4 cator and activist, and a pioneer in the battle
5 against the HIV/AIDS epidemic;

6 (2) supports current and emerging educators
7 and activists, especially those of color and who are
8 multilingual, who adhere to a comprehensive sex
9 education agenda that is rooted in empirical and sci-
10 entific evidence, is culturally competent, and pro-
11 motes the tolerance of sexual orientation and the
12 destigmatization of HIV/AIDS;

13 (3) addresses the high rates of uninsured and
14 underinsured, lack of education, cultural factors, and
15 lack of knowledge about status that results in less
16 than 30 percent of HIV-infected persons in the
17 United States receiving life-saving antiretroviral
18 drugs leading to premature death, disability, and
19 heightened transmissibility of infection, particularly
20 among Blacks and Latinos;

1 (4) commits to supporting prevention and treat-
2 ment facilities and programs in areas and States
3 that have historically and are presently experiencing
4 high rates of HIV/AIDS infections and have high
5 uninsured rates, such as New York, California, the
6 rural Deep South, and South Florida;

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