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LRB102 16171 LAW 21550 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of Karen GJ
4 Lewis of Chicago, who passed away on February 8, 2021; and

5 WHEREAS, Karen Lewis was born in Chicago to Geoffrey
6 Jennings and Martha Gakins on July 20, 1953; she attended
7 Kozminski Elementary School and Kenwood High School, until she
8 accepted early admission at Mount Holyoke College; she later
9 transferred to Dartmouth College, where she earned the
10 distinction of being the only African American woman in the
11 class of 1974; she married John W. Lewis; and

12 WHEREAS, Karen Lewis was a chemistry teacher in the
13 Chicago Public Schools (CPS) system, where she taught at both
14 King College Prep High School and Lane Tech High School, for 22
15 years; and

16 WHEREAS, Karen Lewis became a member of the Chicago
17 Teachers Union (CTU) in 1988, where she served as a member of
18 the House of Delegates, as High School Functional Vice
19 President, and as a member of the Illinois State Certification
20 Board; she was elected president of the Chicago Teachers Union
21 (CTU) on June 11, 2010; she was reelected to a second term in
22 May 2012; she successfully led a nine-day strike against the

1 Chicago Board of Education in 2012, which resulted in a fair
2 and equitable contract for her members and board agreement to
3 implement many of CTU's recommendations to enhance the
4 learning process; under her direction, the CTU published the
5 study entitled The Schools Chicago's Students Deserve, which
6 argued for education reforms within Chicago Public Schools;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, Karen Lewis further served educators nationwide
9 and throughout Illinois; she was the vice president of the
10 American Federation of Teachers, representing more than 1.7
11 million members; she was elected executive vice president to
12 the more than 100,000 members of the Illinois Federation of
13 Teachers in 2010; and

14 WHEREAS, Karen Lewis received numerous awards and
15 recognitions for her relentless fight for education equity and
16 for giving Chicago's students the schools they deserve; she
17 received National Board Certification in 2002; she was
18 recently presented with a Doctorate of Humane Letters from the
19 National Labor College and her alma mater Mt. Holyoke College;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, Karen Lewis worked tirelessly to foster
22 excellence in the teaching and learning experience, to guard
23 against opportunistic self-interest groups who would eradicate

1 public education, to advocate for equal quality education for
2 all students, and to protect the rights of educators
3 throughout the State of Illinois; she gave strength to tens of
4 thousands of Chicago Teachers Union educators who followed her
5 lead and live by her principles to this day; she will be
6 remembered as a true champion and a powerful, prolific
7 advocate for educators, students, their families, and the
8 communities in which they live; and

9 WHEREAS, Karen Lewis enjoyed watching foreign films,
10 playing tennis, reading, and traveling; she spoke three
11 languages; she loved opera and show tunes; she will be dearly
12 missed; and

13 WHEREAS, Karen Lewis was the doting daughter of the late
14 Geoffrey Jennings and Martha Gakins; the beloved wife of John
15 W. Lewis; the loving stepmother of Antionette, Randolph, and
16 Adolph; the proud grandmother of Kariah, Aaron, John, Jade,
17 Jasmine, and Journey; the caring great-grandmother of Angel
18 and Michaela; the dear sister of Keli Jennings; and a friend to
19 many; therefore, be it

20 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
21 HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
22 we mourn the passing of Karen GJ Lewis and extend our sincere
23 condolences to her family, friends, and all who knew and loved

1 her; and be it further

2 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
3 presented to the family of Karen Lewis as an expression of our
4 deepest sympathy.