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LRB102 18299 LAW 26026 r

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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois Senate are saddened to learn of the death of Bernarda "Bernie" Wong of Chicago, who passed away on April 27, 2021; and

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WHEREAS, Bernie Wong was born in Hong Kong to Jorge and Virginia Lo in 1943; she came to the U.S. at the age of 18; she obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology at Briar Cliff College in Sioux City, Iowa in 1966; she earned her Master of Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis in 1968; she married Albert Yum-Chiu Wong in December 1968, and he preceded her in death on March 8, 2019; and

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WHEREAS, Bernie Wong worked as a social worker in the Chicagoland area before she co-founded the Chinese American Service League (CASL) in 1978, a non-profit organization that has helped countless Chinese immigrants by providing social services and programs; she helped seniors, families, and undocumented immigrants by offering a number of services at CASL, including teaching English as a second language, job training, elder care, daycare, and early childhood education; she served as the president of CASL for decades before stepping down in 2016, but she continued serving as an advisor and a volunteer in retirement; and

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1           WHEREAS, As its first employee, Bernie Wong began the  
2 Chinese American Service League with a \$16,000 budget, and she  
3 led CASL into becoming the largest and most prominent social  
4 service organization serving Asian Americans in the Midwest  
5 today, with more than 600 employees, hundreds of volunteers,  
6 and a budget of more than \$34 million; among CASL's many  
7 achievements, she was especially proud of the development of  
8 the Albert and Bernie Wong Senior Living Community and the Kam  
9 L. Liu Community Service Center; through CASL, she  
10 strengthened Chinatown's community, which led to it becoming  
11 consolidated into one legislative district; she was also  
12 instrumental in the development of several attractions,  
13 including Chinatown Square and Ping Tom Memorial Park; and

14           WHEREAS, Bernie Wong's work went beyond the Chinese  
15 American Service League; she broke barriers in Chicago by  
16 becoming the first Asian American to be appointed to the  
17 boards of the United Way of Metropolitan Chicago and the  
18 Chicago Public Library; she was a founding board member of the  
19 National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA) and the founder  
20 of Chinese Immigrant Services Agencies Network International  
21 (CISANI); she chaired Mayor Richard M. Daley's Advisory  
22 Council on Asian Affairs, and she served on the Asian Advisory  
23 Council for Governors Pat Quinn and Bruce Rauner; she belonged  
24 to the boards of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and  
25 Refugee Rights (ICIRR) and Leadership Greater Chicago; she

1 also served as a council member of the Illinois Department on  
2 Aging; and

3 WHEREAS, Bernie Wong was recognized and honored by a  
4 number of organizations, mayors, governors, and presidents for  
5 her service and work, and her awards included the Community  
6 Organizer Trailblazer Award from the Rainbow/Push Coalition,  
7 the Distinguished Alumni Award from both Briar Cliff College  
8 and Washington University in St. Louis, the Edward J. Williams  
9 Community Leadership Award from Harris Bank, the Distinguished  
10 Community Leader award from then-Mayor Richard Daley, and the  
11 Champions of Change award by then-President Barack Obama in  
12 March 2012; and

13 WHEREAS, Bernie Wong was active in St. Therese Chinese  
14 Catholic Church, where she sang in the choir; and

15 WHEREAS, Bernie Wong was a trailblazing pioneer and a  
16 champion of social justice who dedicated her life to serving  
17 immigrants; her legacy will live on in the mission of the  
18 Chinese American Service League; and

19 WHEREAS, Bernie Wong is survived by her daughter, Jacinta  
20 Wong, and her grandchildren, Tiana and Matthew; therefore, be  
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1           RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL  
2 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of  
3 Bernarda "Bernie" Wong and extend our sincere condolences to  
4 her family, friends, and all who knew and loved her; and be it  
5 further

6           RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
7 presented to the family of Bernie Wong as an expression of our  
8 deepest sympathy.