



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

COMMEMORATING THE EXCEPTIONAL LIFE AND MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF EMORY WARDELL WILLIAMS

WHEREAS, Emory Williams, community leader, teacher, and father figure to countless students died at the age of 91 leaving behind a devoted family, thousands of students, friends and a community profoundly enriched for having known him; and

WHEREAS, Emory Williams will long be remembered for being an exemplary and dedicated educator. He enjoyed a long and distinguished career, thousands of young people were the beneficiaries of his generous heart and learned from his dignified example. He took great care to understand his students; he respected them and their abilities and in return earned respect and admiration from them; and

WHEREAS, Emory Williams was born and educated in St. Louis, Missouri. He attended Fisk University before entering the United States Army and serving his country with distinction during World War II. After returning to civilian life he earned his bachelor's degree from North Carolina Central State University and his master's degree in Counseling Psychology from Temple University; and

WHEREAS, Emory Williams served an educator and counselor in the Philadelphia Public School System, was a psychology instructor at Tennessee State University and an educator in the Chicago Public School System before joining Evanston Township High School where he was the Supervisor of Vocational Services and Director of the Cooperative Education Department. He became a fixture in the school and a leader in the community. He was a venerated and treasured teacher there for over twenty-seven years. As head of the Occupational Education division he understood that college was not for every student, but recognized the importance of quality vocational learning and careers in the trades. He retired from ETHS in 1994; and

WHEREAS, Emory Williams was exceptional at assessing and encouraging people's strengths, and truly believed in the importance of an education; and served on the Oakton Community College board. He was on the board from 2003 to 2009, during which time he served as board chairman, vice chairman and secretary. From 2011 to 2015, he sponsored the Kenny Jackson Williams Memorial Scholarship to support a minority student attending Oakton full or part time. "Emory was a strong advocate for community colleges. He was deeply connected to the Evanston community and was instrumental in moving the college forward in our efforts to be a welcoming and diverse community, particularly for students and employees of color," said Oakton President Joianne L. Smith; and

WHEREAS, Emory Williams was described by many as the consummate gentleman. He possessed impeccable manners, an unmatched sartorial flair and a charming and charismatic personality. He had a quiet demeanor, but a sparking sense of humor underneath. He was a man of few words, but the words he chose were powerful and impactful; and

WHEREAS, Emory Williams represented the best qualities of citizenship and humanity through his work with countless civic and community activities in Evanston. He served on the boards of the Youth Organization Umbrella, the New Trier Federal Credit Union, Earn and Learn, Meals at Home, Citizen's Lighthouse Community Land Trust and was a trustee of the Second Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, Emory Williams' spirit remains alive in the community both in the great works he accomplished as well as the great works he inspired as a mentor. One example is the Evanston Youth Job Center, an organization that he helped inspire through his close friendship with his former employee and mentee Ann Jennett, its founder and longtime Executive Director. The Youth Job Center has been a leading provider of employment-related services for disadvantaged and at-risk youth in Evanston and Chicago, serving more than 20,000 young people during their 30-year history. Many former students credit him as their inspiration and have described his vocational programs as a lifeline; and

WHEREAS, Emory Williams' exceptional abilities singled him out for distinction and the community recognized him with numerous honors. In addition to others, he was honored by the Illinois State Board of Education, the Chessman Club of the North Shore, Real M.M.E.N. (Men Meeting Evanston's Needs) the Evanston-North Shore Branch of the NAACP. In 2012 he was presented with the Annual Work Ethic Award by the Forrest E. Powell Foundation in honor of his commitment to helping so many young people learn the value of work and for the exemplary example he gave throughout his long life; and

WHEREAS, throughout his life Emory Williams appreciated and nurtured his close family ties. He was the proud son of the late David Williams and Scottie Hall Williams. Throughout his life he remained very close to his six siblings, Herman, Althea, Evelyn, David, Larry and Maurice. He was exceptionally proud of his remarkably accomplished daughter, Dr. Andrea Williams Lawrence and each of his grandchildren Dr. Deirdre Lawrence Kittner, Allegra Lawrence-Hardy, and Valerie Lawrence, and his great-grandchildren Alexandra Lawrence, Avery Lawrence and Madeline Hardy; and

WHEREAS, Emory Williams will be dearly missed by his family, countless students, friends, neighbors and co-workers. His loss will be felt acutely by his longtime companion Gerri Sizemore. Along with so many other relatives and friends, the community mourns the loss of Emory Williams; and.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Commissioners of Cook County that the Board on behalf of the nearly the 5.2 million residents of Cook County commemorates the exceptional life of Emory Williams, and herewith expresses its sincere gratitude for the invaluable contributions he has made to the Citizens of Cook County, Illinois; and does hereby offer its deepest condolences and most heartfelt sympathy to the family and many friends of Emory Williams and joins them in sorrow at the loss of this remarkable and accomplished community leader; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this text be spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body and a suitable copy of same be tendered to the family of Emory Williams, that his memory may be so honored.