



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING THE LIFE OF TEMA BAUER

WHEREAS, Tema Bauer, one of Illinois' oldest Holocaust survivors, has died at the age of 105. She lost all 38 family members and her right arm to the Nazis but found a new life in Chicago with fellow survivor Morris Bauer, who "told her that she need not worry about the future because he would always take care of her;" and

WHEREAS, Tema grew up in a Jewish family in Lodz. She was the youngest of Hendel and Chil Posalska's nine children. Her father Chil was a cattle dealer. When the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, her siblings moved their parents to a smaller town, thinking it might be safer. Tema stayed behind to close up the family home. She was supposed to follow them to the country but was arrested and ordered into the Jewish ghetto in Lodz. Her relatives were all sent to Chelmno, described by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as "the first stationary facility where poison gas was used for the mass murder of Jews." None survived; and

WHEREAS, for a time, she worked in the ghetto, first in a kitchen, then at a shoe factory. In 1943, she was sent to the slave labor camp Skarżysko-Kamienna. During the three-day train journey to get there, the packed cars had no room to sit, no water, no food, and no bathroom facilities. From there, she was sent to work in the munition's factory in Leipzig, where she was injured during an explosion. Tema, who was right-handed, lost her right arm. A Jewish doctor helped her survive by amputating it above her elbow without any anesthesia or antibiotics. Two months after she lost her arm, she and other women laborers were ordered on a six-day death march toward the Elbe River. The Allied forces were in the area and as they drew near, the Nazi captors fled; and

WHEREAS, after the war, she returned to Lodz in search of her family. There she saw her future husband Morris, then called by his Yiddish name Moishe. He had survived at least seven camps. German soldiers needed boots, and his skill as a cobbler kept him alive. They were married in 1945 and found their way to a displaced-persons camp in Germany. They hoped to immigrate to Israel but could not because of the injury to her arm. Israel wouldn't or couldn't take anyone who was not capable of working or fighting in the Army. Their first son, Jerry, was born in that camp. In 1949, they arrived at Ellis Island and travelled to Chicago where they eventually settled in East Rogers Park; and

WHEREAS, to help get their life started in Chicago, Morris borrowed \$1,758.38 from the Jewish Family and Community Service organization to open a shoe-repair shop on Devon Avenue. In time, he would start doing custom work for orthopedic surgeons, modifying children's shoes, and helping others with special orthopedic needs. The Bauers were proud that, by 1956, they had paid back every penny of the loan; and

WHEREAS, Tema and Morris built a life in Chicago. Their friends were other Holocaust survivors with whom they shared memories and experiences. They raised their two sons, Jerry and Michael, in Rogers Park. Jerry studied medicine at the University of Illinois Abraham Lincoln School of Medicine. He is board certified in neurosurgery and practiced in Park Ridge, Illinois. Their second son, Michael, who was born in Chicago, became a lawyer and political fundraiser who helped elect LGBTQ candidates before his death in 2019 from melanoma; and

WHEREAS, Tema is survived by her beloved son Jerry, three grandchildren, and seven great grandchildren.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners of Cook County, on behalf of the 5.2 million residents of Cook County, honors the life of Tema Bauer, salutes her courage and tenacity during the Holocaust, and thanks her for educating the people of Cook County about the reality of the Holocaust. May her memory be a blessing and a reminder that we must all remain vigilant against the devastating harm and cruelty that can grow from blind hatred of others; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body and that an official copy of same be tendered to the Illinois Holocaust Museum and to the family of Tema Bauer.