



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING AND REMEMBERING THE LIFE OF ZENA RAY "ZEKE" UPSHAW, PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL PLAYER AND UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LABORATORY SCHOOLS ALUM

WHEREAS, Zena Ray “Zeke” Upshaw was born on May 27, 1991 on the Southside of Chicago to loving parents Zena Reynolds and Jewel Upshaw; and

WHEREAS, as a child, Zeke gravitated toward sports and at the early age of six began playing organized basketball; and

WHEREAS, Zeke attended Ariel Community Academy and based on his outstanding academics was one of the selected few, to receive the “Rogers Scholars,” to attend the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools (“Lab”) under the John W. Rogers Jr. scholarship program; and

WHEREAS, in 2008 as a junior Zeke averaged 24 points, 12 rebounds and seven assists, and he was named the most valuable player of the Independent School League. In addition, he is the only alum to have their jersey retired at Lab; and

WHEREAS, Zeke became the first student-athlete to graduate from Lab, alongside one of his best friends Alexis Jenkins, to receive a Division I scholarship in which they both signed to Illinois State University; and

WHEREAS, Zeke transferred for his final season of NCAA eligibility to play at Hofstra University, where he tied the record for most threes in a game, led the Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) in scoring at 19.8 points per game and earned second-team All-CAA honors; and

WHEREAS, Zeke received his master’s degree in higher education, and played basketball professionally overseas before joining the Detroit Pistons affiliate, Grand Rapids Drive, in the NBA Development League; and

WHEREAS, on March 24, 2018, Zeke aided the Drive in their first ever playoff berth in a 101-99 home win over the Long Island Nets. However, in the game’s final minute Zeke collapsed. No CPR or AED was facilitated. Two days later, Zeke passed away from sudden cardiac arrest at the age of 26; and

WHEREAS, above all of his tremendous accomplishments in basketball, Zeke was most known for his magnificent smile, undeniably kind soul and his unwavering love he had for his family, especially his mother; and

WHEREAS, Zeke’s mother, Jewel, has now devoted her life to carry on his legacy and his personal commitment to help the youth. The Zeke Upshaw Foundation was launched in March 2019 with the mission to help spread heart health awareness and advocate for improved heart screenings for all athletes; and

WHEREAS, in partnership with Zeke’s friends and family, a scholarship fund has been established in his honor at Lab known as The Zeke Upshaw, ’09 Memorial Fund that will provide important financial support to talented and highly-motivated students whose financial situation might otherwise prevent them from attending Lab; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the President and Cook County Board of Commissioners does hereby honor the life and outstanding accomplishments of Zena Ray “Zeke” Upshaw; 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 be tendered to the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools and Zeke Upshaw's family as a symbol of condolence and recognition of Zeke's irrefutable dedication to the game he loved..