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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 James Lee Burnett Jr., Ph.D. of Sartell, Minnesota and formally of Champaign, who passed away on April 22, 2021; and

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WHEREAS, Dr. James Burnett was born to Dr. Evelyn Burnett Underwood (Bishop King James) and James Lee Burnett Sr. in Champaign on September 1, 1959; he was a student at University High Lab School where he excelled in both athletics and academia; after high school, he attended Wilberforce University where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration in 1981; he earned a Bachelor of Science from Southwest Minnesota State University in Sociology/Anthropology in 1996; he went on to earn two masters' degrees in 2002 and 2005 from Minnesota State University, Mankato; he continued his education at South Dakota State University where he was awarded a Ph.D. in Rural Sociology in 2011; and

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WHEREAS, After graduating college, Dr. James Burnett worked as a corrections officer in Michigan for 10 years; he was then a professor at Minnesota State University, Mankato and continued on this path to Idaho State University and Urbana University; throughout his life, he taught and mentored many students for academic and personal development, created

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1 peer educator programs, and integrated active learning and  
2 service learning into his classes; he designed  
3 trauma-informed, academic at-risk youth mentoring intervention  
4 programs, such as the Bannock County Idaho and Idaho State  
5 University Partnership, where students served as mentors to  
6 youth involved in the criminal justice system; and

7 WHEREAS, Dr. James Burnett was a sociocultural ecologist  
8 whose research and service agenda examined and promoted the  
9 maintenance of a balance between human adaptation and the  
10 physical environment; his main areas of research were critical  
11 criminology, race ethnicity and social justice, and urban and  
12 rural sociology; and

13 WHEREAS, Dr. James Burnett's life experiences led him to  
14 find his true calling and purpose as a probation officer for  
15 the Mental Health Court; he specialized in intervening for  
16 clients in the court system and diverting them to treatment;  
17 his areas of specialization were client-centered and involved  
18 coordinating and providing intensive supervision and a broad  
19 range of rehabilitative and case management services within  
20 the Mental Health Court continuum; and

21 WHEREAS, In addition, Dr. Burnett previously worked as a  
22 domestic violence facilitator, with the Catholic Charities  
23 Hope Community Support Program in Saint Cloud, Minnesota, and

1 as a teaching substitute for St. Cloud School District 742;  
2 and

3 WHEREAS, Dr. James Burnett authored over 50 research  
4 articles, books, and presentations; one of his biggest  
5 accomplishments was writing and publishing his book Hood II  
6 Hood: Helping Prisoners Transition to Freedom; and

7 WHEREAS, Dr. James Burnett was an associate minister at  
8 New Free Will Baptist Church where over the years he served the  
9 youth locally, regionally, and nationally with Pastor and  
10 General Bishop King Underwood; he was a proud member of the 4th  
11 Judicial District Racial Equity Committee; in 2016, he was  
12 appointed by Stearns County Community Corrections to serve as  
13 an Advisory Board Member in Saint Cloud, Minnesota; as a  
14 certified sociological practitioner, he was a member of the  
15 Association of Applied and Clinical Sociologists (2011); and

16 WHEREAS, Dr. James Burnett's unrelenting dedication to the  
17 community resulted in numerous awards and recognitions,  
18 including the NAACP Appreciation Award in 2011; he was proud  
19 to be honored at the 5th Annual African Mental Health Summit in  
20 recognition of exemplary scholarship in translational science  
21 while conducting, presenting, and publishing culturally  
22 responsive research (2014-2019) as a postdoctoral research  
23 trainee at the University of Minnesota, Crookston; he received

1 many invitations for speaking engagements, such as being  
2 chosen as the keynote speaker at Metropolitan State University  
3 in St. Paul, Minnesota during their Race and Social Justice  
4 Conference; and

5 WHEREAS, Dr. James Burnett's passion and love for his  
6 family was, above-all, most important to him; and

7 WHEREAS, Dr. James Burnett was preceded in death by his  
8 twins, James Michael Burnett and Jasmine Marie Burnett; and

9 WHEREAS, Dr. James Burnett was survived by his wife, Jody  
10 Burnett (Varing); his children, Robbie Rochelle Burnett, James  
11 Lee Chad Burnett III (Gwynder), Tobias Alexander Wheeler,  
12 DaNeya Martina Burnett, DaNaya Michelle Burnett, Anika Dakota  
13 Pendleton-Burnett, Ayanna Rochelle Taylor, Anthony Dale  
14 Burnett, Trevor Jodeci Burnett, and Kendra Christine Burnett,  
15 as well as Matthew Ryan Wheeler, Duane Michael Carter, and  
16 Rachel Renee Nickerson; his grandchildren, Azai, King Tashis,  
17 James IV, Tashi, Kyue', Makylah, and DeAndre; his  
18 great-grandchildren, Novah and D'Anthoni; and his siblings,  
19 Robbin Smith, Minister Ted Burnett (Tuere), Reverend Timothy  
20 Burnett (Cynthia), Angela R. Patterson (B. Kirk), and Pastor  
21 Herbert D. Burnett (Stephanie), as well as Jeff Underwood  
22 (Belinda), Greg Underwood (Priscilla), Janet Ross (Ferron),  
23 Prophetess Judy Grant, and King J. Underwood Jr.; therefore,

1 be it

2 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL  
3 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of  
4 James Lee Burnett Jr., Ph.D. and extend our sincere  
5 condolences to his family, friends, and all who knew and loved  
6 him; and be it further

7 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
8 presented to the family of Dr. James Burnett as an expression  
9 of our deepest sympathy.