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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 Auxiliary Bishop Napoleon "Bill" Harris Sr.; and

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WHEREAS, Bishop Harris was born to Frank Harris and Idella Brown in Jackson, Mississippi on December 13, 1935; at a young age, he was affectionately called "Billbo" by an aunt, and his nickname was eventually shortened to "Bill"; he moved to Chicago at eight years old; he received his primary education within the Chicago Public Schools system; he attended DuSable High School, where he excelled in his studies and was a cross country runner on the track team; and

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WHEREAS, Bishop Harris left high school early to join the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War; he had one child before he was stationed in Alaska for two and a half years; during his service, he completed his high school studies and attended the University of Alaska in Anchorage; he joined the Church of God in Christ (COGIC); he then married Barbara Stephen, and their union had five children; he concluded his military service after approximately four years; and

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WHEREAS, To provide for his growing family, Bishop Harris worked at the U.S. Post Office, The Western Electric Company

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1 as a machine operator, a flour factory, a cab company as a
2 chauffeur, the Central Wax Paper Company, and the Chicago
3 Transit Authority (CTA) as a bus driver, occasionally working
4 two jobs; he also continued to pursue his education, enrolling
5 at the Dunbar Vocational High School to pursue a degree in
6 Design and Tailoring; and

7 WHEREAS, Bishop Harris began a new chapter in his life,
8 marrying Sherelene A. Robinson on February 7, 1966, and their
9 union had two children; he became community minded and was
10 involved in the civil rights movement; he earned his
11 bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Roosevelt
12 University while simultaneously working several managerial
13 positions for Department of Labor and the Department of Mental
14 Health at Madden Mental Health Center in Hines; he was
15 eventually promoted as director of the Rehabilitation Workshop
16 Programs; and

17 WHEREAS, Bishop Harris went on to obtain two master's
18 degrees in Public Administration and Theology Studies; he was
19 a civil servant for 30 years and concluded his tenure with the
20 State of Illinois as a regional business manager; upon being
21 awarded his master's degree in Public Administration, he
22 joined forces with the University of Illinois Hospital as a
23 health center and hospital administrator; and

1 WHEREAS, Bishop Harris pursued his theology studies at the
2 Moody Baptist Institute-Chicago and the Logos Graduate College
3 in New York; he was ordained in 1974; he was also an avid
4 worker in the Jurisdictional Sunday School Department; he was
5 affiliated with The Reed's Temple COGIC, Penson Temple COGIC,
6 and Tabernacle COGIC before becoming a pastor in 1979; and

7 WHEREAS, Bishop Harris established The Community COGIC in
8 1979; along with his wife, Sherelene, they overcame racial
9 barriers, threats, and vandalism as the founders of the first
10 Black church in the Village of Hazel Crest; their church
11 remained in Hazel Crest for 27 years until it was moved to a
12 much larger property in Hammond, Indiana in 2007; and

13 WHEREAS, Bishop Harris' service extended beyond his local
14 church; he was appointed as a district superintendent and an
15 administrative assistant by Prelate Ocie Booker; he was
16 recommended for elevation to the episcopacy by Bishop Booker
17 in 2018; he was consecrated as an auxiliary bishop at the COGIC
18 Holy Convocation in St. Louis, Missouri in 2019; he also
19 served as a father figure to many young elders in First
20 Jurisdiction Illinois; and

21 WHEREAS, Bishop Harris enjoyed traveling and loved
22 celebrating his children's successes and contributions to
23 humanity; he will be remembered as a community leader, an

1 advocate for education, and a man of faith; and

2 WHEREAS, Bishop Harris was preceded in death by his
3 parents; his brother, Sylvester Collins; his son, Napoleon
4 Harris Jr.; and his grandson, Shannon Smith; and

5 WHEREAS, Bishop Harris is survived by his wife of 57
6 years, Sherelene A. Harris; his children, Jamal (Gloria)
7 Akbar, Arlene Little, Derrick Harris, Keith (Vonda) Harris,
8 Steven (Evelyn) Harris, Jeraldnye (Anthony) Harris-Stimage,
9 and Jarrett (Joy) Harris; his daughter-in-law, Brenda Harris;
10 his bonus children, Charletta Little, Willa (Zachary)
11 Knighton, Mario Little, and Marco Little; his grandchildren,
12 Darell Hann, Jamil Hann, Jamal Akbar Jr., Jamillah Ellis,
13 Antonio Harris, Fernando Little, Reginald Little, Lonniece
14 Boone, Khiesha Boone, Shikar Boone, State Senator Napoleon B.
15 (Nicole) Harris III, Tomeika Anderson, Asia Thurston, Jonathan
16 Harris, Keisha Owens, Derek Hudson, Steven Harris Jr., Jonas
17 Harris, Quintin Harris, Ikea Harris, Marvin Simpson, Chariti
18 Phillips, and Hope Harris; his great-grandchildren; his
19 great-great grandchildren; his sister, Idella "Adell" Brown,
20 his sons in faith; his nieces, nephews, and cousins; his
21 friends; and his congregation of 42 years, The Community
22 COGIC; therefore, be it

23 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL

1 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
2 Auxiliary Bishop Napoleon "Bill" Harris Sr. and extend our
3 sincere condolences to his family, friends, and all who knew
4 and loved him; and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
6 presented to the family of Bishop Harris as an expression of
7 our deepest sympathy.