



# Office of the City Clerk

City Hall  
121 N. LaSalle St.  
Room 107  
Chicago, IL 60602  
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## Legislation Details (With Text)

**File #:** R2021-210  
**Type:** Resolution  
**Status:** Adopted  
**File created:** 2/26/2021  
**In control:** City Council  
**Final action:** 2/26/2021  
**Title:** Tribute to late Karen GJ Lewis and call for Chicago Board of Education to grant honorary diploma from Kenwood High School  
**Sponsors:** Sadlowski Garza, Susan, Ramirez-Rosa, Carlos, King, Sophia D., Harris, Michelle A., Cardenas, George A., Quinn, Marty, Coleman, Stephanie D., Brookins, Jr., Howard, Rodriguez, Michael D., Scott, Jr. Michael, Sigcho-Lopez, Byron, Ervin, Jason C., Taliaferro, Chris, Reboyas, Ariel, Waguespack, Scott, Austin, Carrie M., Nugent, Samantha, Reilly, Brendan, Martin, Matthew J., Osterman, Harry, Hadden, Maria E., Silverstein, Debra L., Mitts, Emma, Thompson, Patrick D.  
**Indexes:** TRIBUTES  
**Attachments:** 1. R2021-210.pdf

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
2/26/2021	1	City Council	Introduced (Agreed Calendar)	
2/26/2021	1	City Council	Adopted	Pass

To be referred to the Committee on Education and Child Development

### RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Karen GJ Lewis was born on the South Side of Chicago on July 20, 1953, to parents who were CPS educators;

WHEREAS, Mrs. Lewis attended Kenwood High School, but utilized the academic privilege to attend Mount Holyoke College before she received her high school diploma;

WHEREAS, as a student, Mrs. Lewis took part in boycotts at Kenwood to demand an increase in Black teachers and administrators, the incorporation of Black history as part of the curriculum, and improved resources for predominantly Black schools in Chicago;

WHEREAS, Mrs. Lewis transferred from Mount Holyoke College to Dartmouth College during the era of de-segregation and co-educational reform, and became the only Black female graduate of the Class of 1974 with degrees in music and sociology;

WHEREAS, Mrs. Lewis also attained a master's degree in Inner City Studies from Chicago's Northeastern Illinois University, a critical institution for the education of Black and working class Chicagoans;

WHEREAS, Mrs. Lewis began her 22-year career with Chicago Public Schools as a substitute teacher, whose determination and passion led her to become a full-time teacher at Sullivan High School, Lane Tech College Prep and King College Prep;

WHEREAS, Mrs. Lewis, in her career as an educator, believed in teaching the whole child, and, as she said, "measured [her] success as a teacher by the hugs at the end of the year, by the conversations with kids who say, 'I never thought of it that way.'"

WHEREAS, Mrs. Lewis joined the Chicago Teachers Union in 1988, and became a fierce advocate for increased school funding, transparency in administration, and social justice within education and beyond;

WHEREAS, Mrs. Lewis became a CTU delegate at Lane Tech, where she received her national board certification and helped lead efforts to integrate students of color and students from working families into a student body which was historically white and affluent;

WHEREAS, Mrs. Lewis worked with like-minded educators and CTU members to become a co-chair of the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE), a group of educators who prioritized funding public education and fighting for the collective good of students, families and school communities;

WHEREAS, Mrs. Lewis was elected president of the Chicago Teachers Union in 2010 by a 60 percent majority in a hard-fought campaign committed to grassroots organizing and fighting school privatization;

*WHEREAS, Mrs. Lewis led by example, reducing the salaries of union officers, and transferring the savings into outreach for educators and staff, as well as spearheading The Schools Chicago's*

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To be referred to the Committee on Education and Child Development

Students Deserve, a 2012 report calling for increased funding for schools, smaller classes, more nurses and social workers, and increasing educator voice in curriculum;

WHEREAS, in the fall of 2012, Mrs. Lewis led the Chicago Teachers Union on a seven-day strike that won increased salaries for teachers, and an end to policies that would have imposed measures such as merit pay and harsh evaluations to the detriment of new and veteran educators alike;

WHEREAS, Mrs. Lewis' determined advocacy during the 2012 strike and her administration's opposition to harmful education "reform" policies launched a movement of teacher activism across the United States to illuminate the increasing threats to public education;

WHEREAS, Mrs. Lewis was a connoisseur of arts and culture, including mastery of three languages, knowledge of the Talmud and a vast knowledge of opera and stage productions;

WHEREAS, Mrs. Lewis met her beloved husband John Lewis as they both pursued their passion for education as teachers at Lane Tech, and celebrated 20 happy and fulfilling years together during her life;

WHEREAS, Mrs. Lewis was a leader who advocated powerfully for educators and the field of public education, and took a stand for the underserved and dispossessed while extending a human touch even to her opponents, serving as an example of humble leadership for generations of leaders now and to come; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the members of Chicago City Council do hereby recognize and honor Karen GJ Lewis as a determined fighter for the rights of educators, students and communities across the City of Chicago,

and recognize her as a pivotal leader for civil rights and social justice as president of the Chicago Teachers Union.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this City Council will transmit a communication to the Chicago Board of Education that Mrs. Lewis be granted an honorary diploma from Kenwood High School, and recognition of her trailblazing work in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century history of Chicago Public Schools.

Susan Sadlowski Garza,  
Alderdwoman, 10<sup>th</sup> Ward

Carlos Ramirez Rosa,  
Alderman, 35<sup>th</sup> Ward

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The following legislation is being introduced by Aid. Susan Sadlowski Garza regarding A Resolution Honoring Former CTU President Karen Lewis co-sponsored by

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Alderman Ward 12

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Alderman Ward 13

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Alderman Ward 14

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Alderman Ward 17

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Alderman Ward 11 1 | Page

The following legislation is being introduced by Aid. Susan Sadlowski Garza regarding A Resolution Honoring Former CTU President Karen Lewis co-sponsored by

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Alderman Ward 35

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Alderman Ward 40

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Alderman Ward 44

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The following legislation is being introduced by Aid. Susan Sadlowski Garza regarding A Resolution Honoring Former CTU President Karen Lewis co-sponsored by

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Alderman Ward 45

Mayor Lightfoot

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Alderman Ward 46

Clerk Valencia

Matt Martin

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CITY OF CHICAGO

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OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK ANNA M.  
VALENCIA

## Chicago City Council Co-Sponsor Form

**R2021-210**

**Tribute to late Karen GJ Lewis and call for Chicago Board of Education to grant honorary diploma from Kenwood High School.**

### Adding Co-Sponsor(s)

*Please ADD Co-Sponsor(s) Shown Below- (Principal Sponsor's Consent Required)*

Ward) Ward)

**Principal Sponsor: Alderman Sadlowski Garza**

*(Signature)*

*Removing Co-Sponsor(s) Please REMOVE Co-Sponsor(s) Below - (Principal  
Sponsor's Consent NOT Required)*

**.(LZZHward)**

*(Signature)*

Alderman

*(Signature)*

*Date Filed:*

Final Copies To Be Filed With: • Chairman of Committee to which legislation was referred  
• City Clerk

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