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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

RAHM EMANUEL
MAYOR

March 18, 2015

TO THE HONORABLE, THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I transmit herewith, together with Aldermen Dowell, Burns, Holmes, Harris, Beale, Pope, Cardenas, Burke, Thomas, Cochran, Brookins, Solis, Maldonado, Burnett, Graham, Austin, Mitts, Tunney, Cappleman, Pawar, Osterman, and Silverstein, a resolution honoring the life and memory of the Reverend Willie T. Barrow.

Your favorable consideration of this resolution will be appreciated.

Very truly yours,

Mayor

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ALDERMEN MICHELLr HARRR, ANTHONY BEALtr JOHN POPE. GEORGE CARDENAS. EDWARD BURKE, HOWARD BROOKINS, DANIEL SOLIS, WALTER BURNETT, CARRIE AUSTIN, EMMA MITTS, TOM TUNNEY. AMEYA PAWAR, HARRY

OSTERMAN, DEBRA SILVERSTEIN

Presented by Mayor Rahm Emanuel

on **March 18, 2015**

, The Members of this Chamber mourn the death, on March 12, 2015, at age 90, of Reverend Willie T. Barrow, the revered Civil Rights icon and Chicago activist, whose life on the front lines in the fight for equality, fairness and economic opportunity earned her the moniker "The Little Warrior"; and

WHEREAS, Born in Burton, Texas on December 7, 1924 to Nelson and Octavia Taplin, Reverend Barrow grew up on a farm with six siblings. Her father was a minister in the Church of God. As a young girl, Reverend Barrow would travel with him in his wagon to speaking engagements; and

WHEREAS, Willie Barrow was just 12 years old when she led her first demonstration to protest unequal treatment. The year was 1936 and the public schools in rural Burton were still segregated. Willie and her African-American classmates were forced to walk to school, while white students rode the bus. Rather than accept the situation, Willie organized her fellow students and they raised the issue with local school officials. From then on, Black students in Burton took the bus to school; and

WHEREAS, At the tender age of 16, Willie Barrow, who felt a strong calling to ministry, moved to Portland, Oregon, where she attended the Warner-Pacific Theological Seminary. While studying there, Reverend Barrow organized the first African American Church of God in Portland. After graduation, she was ordained as a minister and began her lifelong career as a spiritual and social activist; and

WHEREAS, During World War II, Reverend Barrow worked as a welder in a shipyard, where she met her future husband Clyde Barrow and became actively involved in the labor movement. In 1945, the happy couple moved to Chicago, where Reverend Barrow studied at the Moody Bible Institute and the General Conservatory of Music. When her own minister at the Emerald Avenue Church of God noticed Reverend Barrow's natural leadership ability and seemingly boundless energy, he asked her if she would be willing to assist in organizing civil rights demonstrations. Reverend Barrow agreed, and the rest is history; and

WHEREAS, Beginning in 1953, Reverend Barrow worked as a field organizer for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, where she assisted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., by organizing transportation, shelter, meetings and rallies for demonstrators participating in the major Civil Rights marches of that era, including the 1963 March on Washington and the legendary 1965 March on Selma; and

WHEREAS, In the 1960s, Reverend Barrow was among the founding members of Operation Breadbasket, a program that provided spiritual guidance and practical assistance to communities in need. She went on to serve as co-chair and then, for five years, as executive director of Rainbow/PUSH, the organization that evolved from Operation Breadbasket. The first woman to lead Rainbow/PUSH, Reverend Barrow also served, for ten years, as chair of the Rainbow/PUSH Board of

Directors; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Barrow was also a staunch supporter of the LGBT community. After her adopted son Keith died in 1983 from HIV/AIDS, Reverend Barrow made one of the first pieces of the AIDS Memorial Quilt; and

WHEREAS, Following her retirement from Rainbow/PUSH in 1989, Reverend Barrow remained active in the community. She served as associate minister of her beloved Vernon Park Church of God; mentored more than 100 young people, whom she affectionately called her "Godchildren," in how to promote civil rights, including President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama; and maintained an energetic presence at Rainbow/PUSH's weekly services; and

WHEREAS, A woman of unusual courage and character, who inspired legions of clergy, activists and social justice pioneers, Reverend Willie T. Barrow will always be remembered as a champion of civil rights and social justice, and as a distinguished daughter of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Willie T. Barrow is reunited in death with her beloved husband Clyde and her dear son Keith; now, therefore.

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, assembled this eighteenth day of March, 2015, do hereby honor the life and memory of Reverend Willie T. Barrow; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED. That a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to Dr. Pat Curry, the administrator of Reverend Willie T. Barrow's estate, as a sign of our sympathy and respect.

MAYOR

CITY CLERK