

STATE OF NEW YORK
LEGISLATURE OF ERIE COUNTY

BUFFALO, NEW YORK, MAY 10, 2018

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION IN REMEMBRANCE OF
Frank B. Messiah

WHEREAS, Almighty God, in His infinite wisdom, on April 27, 2018, removed from our midst Frank B. Messiah, in whose death we have lost a sincere and loyal friend, as well as a valued and respected citizen who served our community honorably and with distinguish for decades, and whose family has lost a kind and devoted member; and

WHEREAS, Frank B. Messiah was born on July 18, 1928 in Buffalo, grew up on the West Side, attended School 77 and graduated in 1946 from Grover Cleveland High School; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Messiah met his wife, Ulrica A. Caldwell, a reading teacher in the Buffalo schools, when she was attending Buffalo State College, and they married in 1950 and had three daughters, Leza, Nicolette and Francesca; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Messiah predeceased her husband on December 17, 2017; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Messiah worked as a laborer at Bethlehem Steel and as a janitor and later a machine operator in the Chevrolet engine plant in the Town of Tonawanda; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Messiah then served in the United States Army, attaining the rank of sergeant first class, and became a Buffalo police patrolman in 1954 – only the thirteenth African-American police officer in the City; and

WHEREAS, while with the police, he attended Buffalo State College, earning a bachelor's degree in elementary education in 1961 and a master's degree in administration and supervision in 1969; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Messiah served as a Buffalo police officer for 13 years; and

WHEREAS, after serving as a police officer, Mr. Messiah became a sixth-grade teacher in the Buffalo schools before becoming media coordinator and assistant director of school integration and also served as president of the Black Educators Association; and

WHEREAS, he later became an educational planner with Erie 1 Board of Cooperative Educational Services and then took a position with the New York State Department of Labor,

handling discrimination cases for several decades and finishing his state career as regional administrator of the Office of Affirmative Action Programs; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Mesiah worked as an instructor in the Sociology Department at Canisius College and the Cornell University Buffalo Labor Studies Program, teaching on issues concerning diversity and inclusion; and

WHEREAS, he later studied for a doctorate in educational administration, as part of his lifetime love of education and continual learning; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Mesiah represented the concerns of the African-American community in a variety of community, non-profit and advocacy roles, including serving as President of the Buffalo Branch of the NAACP, a post he held for 20 years before stepping down in 2016; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Mesiah also served as vice president of the New York State NAACP; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Mesiah hosted a bi-weekly hour-long radio show, “The NAACP Speaks,” on WUFO for many years; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Mesiah was also a community activist who fought racism, discrimination, and intolerance, starting with his fight against real estate agents in his Humboldt Parkway neighborhood who were engaging in actions to cajole white residents in certain neighborhoods to sell their houses for less money by alleging African-Americans were going to move into the neighborhood, followed by a protest of the location for the former Woodlawn Junior High School over racial separation, followed by the ground-breaking lawsuit that led to US District Court Judge John T. Curtin’s ruling to integrate the Buffalo schools; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Mesiah always noted progress, but did not stay still, and stated there is still much more work to be done on making our community better; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Mesiah was also involved in political matters, such as registering people to vote, and in 1976, he ran against incumbent State Senator Joseph A. Tauriello in the Democratic primary, losing by fewer than 1,500 votes, but drawing attention in Albany, and in 1985, Governor Mario Cuomo appointed Mr. Mesiah to the governor’s Advisory Committee on Black Affairs; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Mesiah was appointed to the Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority, in 2009; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Mesiah was heavily involved in community and philanthropic affairs, serving on the board of directors of the Greater Buffalo Development Foundation, Western New York Public Broadcasting Corporation, BUILD, the Black Leadership Forum, Afro American Historical Association of the Niagara Frontier, Everywoman’s Opportunity Center, the Black

American Museum and Cultural Center, BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York, Erie County Medical Center Corporation, the YMCA of Greater Buffalo, the Parkside Community Association, the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, the Buffalo FBI office's Citizens Academy Foundation, the Erie County Industrial Development Agency, and the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Mesiah served in leadership roles in many of these organizations and boards and was honored with various recognitions for his service such as the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society's Red Jacket Award for community service in 2002, the NAACP Medgar Evers Award, the Evans-Young Urban League Award, SUNY Buffalo State's Outstanding Alumni Award, the Erie County Bar Association's Justice Award, the YMCA Greater Buffalo Award, the New York State Employees Brotherhood Award, and the Buffalo News' 1986 Citizen of the Year; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Mesiah was a friend, mentor or colleague to many members of the Erie County Legislature and the Erie County Executive and we are grateful for his support and counsel over the years.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Erie County Legislature does hereby mourn the passing of Frank B. Mesiah and pause in its deliberations to honor and celebrate his Life, and offer our thoughts, prayers and deepest sympathy to Mr. Mesiah's daughters, family, friends, and colleagues; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Erie County Legislature expresses its strong gratitude for a life well lived and a community made stronger by Frank Mesiah's presence and actions and wishes him God Speed and ever-lasting peace.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I HAVE HEREUNTO SET MY HAND
AND SIGNATURE.

Hon. Peter J. Savage, III

Chair of the Legislature

Erie County Legislator, 3rd District

Hon. April N.M. Baskin

Majority Leader

Erie County Legislator, 2nd District

Hon. Joseph C. Lorigo

Minority Leader

Erie County Legislator, 10th District

Hon. Barbara Miller-Williams

Erie County Legislator, 1st District

Hon. Kevin R. Hardwick

Erie County Legislator, 4th District

Hon. Thomas A. Loughran

Erie County Legislator, 5th District

Hon. Edward A. Rath, III

Erie County Legislator, 6th District

Hon. Patrick B. Burke

Erie County Legislator, 7th District

Hon. John Bruso

Erie County Legislator, 8th District

Hon. Lynne M. Dixon

Erie County Legislator, 9th District

Hon. John J. Mills

Erie County Legislator, 11th District

Hon. Robert M. Graber

Clerk of the Legislature