

STATE OF NEW YORK  
LEGISLATURE OF ERIE COUNTY  
BUFFALO, NY, JUNE 2, 2020

In Remembrance of Lillie P.W. Stephens

**WHEREAS**, Almighty God, in His infinite wisdom, on May 22, 2020 removed from our midst *Lillie P.W. Stephens* in whose death we have lost a loving wife, mother, grandmother, valued and respected citizen, and whose family has lost a kind and devoted member; and

**WHEREAS**, *Lillie Pearl Stephens* was born on June 13, 1935 in Lake City, Florida; and

**WHEREAS**, Lillie graduated from Richardson High School and would remain in Florida to begin her undergraduate studies at Bethune – Cookman College now Bethune-Cookman University, a historical black college in Daytona Beach, Florida; and

**WHEREAS**, after moving to Buffalo in 1954 with her father, Lillie continued her studies earning her bachelor's degree in Physical Education and a master's degree in Education, both from UB; and

**WHEREAS**, Lillie began her career in the Buffalo schools in 1957, teaching at Bennett High School, where she would meet the love of her life, Edward Stephens; and

**WHEREAS**, on December 21, 1963, Lillie and Edward would solidify their love and unity in marriage; and

**WHEREAS**, Mrs. Stephens was the first African American woman to earn a degree in Physical Education from the University at Buffalo and was the first black woman to become an administrator in the Niagara Falls schools; and

**WHEREAS**, when Mrs. Stephens was appointed to oversee a federal grant program in 1973, she became Niagara Falls' first black woman school administrator; and

**WHEREAS**, after the program ended, she went on to be assistant principal at Trott Vocational High School, assistant principal of LaSalle High School and then served as principal of the 60th Street Elementary School for five years before she retired in 1995; and

**WHEREAS**, Lillie was active for many years in Calvary Episcopal Church in Williamsville, where she was a member of the vestry and served on numerous committees; and

**WHEREAS**, Lillie lived a long and fruitful life and as a longtime leukemia survivor, she was active as a fundraiser with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society; and

**WHEREAS**, as a very passionate and energetic woman, Lillie held active memberships in many local, regional, national and international organizations including, life membership in Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Phi Delta Kappa (Academic) Fraternity, Inc., Zonta International of Amherst, the Buffalo College Club, charter member of Jack & Jill of America, Inc.-Buffalo Chapter, charter member and past President of the National Committee for School Desegregation, life member of the NAACP, former board member Magnet Schools of America, life member of Family and Children Services of Niagara County and many more; and

**WHEREAS**, in addition to her active presence in several organizations, Lillie was affiliated with five Prince Hall Masonic organizations – Paramount Chapter 57, Order of Eastern Star; Bison Assembly 48, Order of the Golden Circle; Esther Court 9, Heroines of Jericho; Emmanuel Royal Court 18, Order of Cyrene Crusaders; and Hadji Court 62, Daughters of Isis – she served as head of each of them; and

**WHEREAS**, among her numerous honors and awards include the Black Educators Association of Western New York Educator of the Year Award and the Coalition of 100 Black Women Buffalo Chapter's Spotlight on Women Award; and

**WHEREAS**, she also established an annual female athletic award in her name with the LaSalle Education Club in Niagara Falls; and

**WHEREAS**, Lillie was preceded in death by her son, E. Anthony Stephens; and

**WHEREAS**, Lillie's illustrious legacy will forever live through her survived loved ones including her husband, Edward; daughter, Pamela Stephens-Jackson; and five grandchildren, Clifton Edward Jackson, Breonna Nikole Jackson, Nina Elizabeth Stephens, Jillian Grace Stephens and Natalie Grace Stephens.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT**

**RESOLVED**, that the Erie County Legislature does hereby mourn the passing of *Lillie Pearl Stephens* and pause in its deliberations to recognize her praiseworthy life, her love of family and her spiritual commitment and devotion to the betterment of our community; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Erie County Legislature expresses its sympathy and condolences to Mrs. Stephens family and to her many friends, knowing full well that she has received her eternal and glorified reward in Heaven, having heard the consoling words of the Master, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant.*"

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**Hon. Jeanne M. Vinal**  
Erie County Legislator, 5<sup>th</sup> District

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**Robert M. Graber**  
Clerk of the Erie County Legislature