

STATE OF NEW YORK  
LEGISLATURE OF ERIE COUNTY  
BUFFALO, NY, JULY 14, 2021

EC LEG JUL 19 '21 PM 4:19

*Congratulating and Honoring Jillian Hanesworth  
Buffalo's First Poet Laureate*

**WHEREAS**, *Jillian Hanesworth* was born and raised on the East Side of Buffalo, NY; and

**WHEREAS**, Jillian began writing at the age of 7, when she would write songs for her mother to sing in church; and

**WHEREAS**, Jillian continued to apply her knowledge as a student at Performing Arts High School and also developed early leadership skills as the captain of the school's undefeated debate team; and

**WHEREAS**, her passion to serve our community began alongside her parents as they helped prepare and serve meals to the homeless community in Buffalo; and

**WHEREAS**, she later took a break from writing to successfully pursue educational goals, and worked to obtain a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and law focusing on reform; and

**WHEREAS**, recognizing her gift for poetry at that moment, Hanesworth decided to stop running from it and in 2017, Jillian committed herself to social change through art, thus began her poetry career and has performed over 200 times, including in Buffalo, New York City, Baltimore, Maryland, Toronto; and

**WHEREAS**, through her great work, Jillian has let her passionate demeanor lead her to empower her audience to take part in demanding and creating sustainable systemic change; and

**WHEREAS**, as a major organizer during the political and racial tension of 2020, more specifically after the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor last summer, Hanesworth led peaceful protests within Buffalo for legislative change; and

**WHEREAS**, on March 16, 2021, the City of Buffalo Common Council made a historical appointment of Jillian as Buffalo's first poet laureate, a position in which she will share her poems for events and special occasions, and for which she plans for so much more; and

**WHEREAS**, Jillian has used her voice to support underserved neighborhoods in Buffalo for the last 5 years, but her new role as poet laureate is bridging the gap between the local government and the community; and

**WHEREAS**, in addition, Jillian proudly serves as Director of Leadership Development at Open Buffalo, a teaching artist with the Dunbar Project at Ujima Theater, an adjunct professor at the University of Buffalo Educational Opportunity Center and also manages Trocaire College's Department of Justice grant; and

**WHEREAS**, along with her exceptional work through Open Buffalo, Hanesworth is also single-handedly running a fundraising campaign to establish little libraries on the East Side and Riverside neighborhoods of Buffalo; and

**WHEREAS**, in continuing to expand her activism, Hanesworth is currently working on her second poetry book titled the *Revolution will Rhyme* which will include transcripts of a conversation she had with Dr. Cornel West; and

**WHEREAS**, her unique journey thus far is nothing short of extraordinary and it is with great admiration that this Honorable Body acknowledges and thanks *Jillian Hanesworth* for her leadership, conquering her own personal mental and emotional setbacks along with her dedication, tremendous efforts through her work, carrying out her mission to serve our community and accomplishing the position of the first ever Poet Laureate of Buffalo.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT**

**RESOLVED**, that the Erie County Legislature does hereby honor *Jillian Hanesworth* for her extraordinary efforts as a counselor, teacher and artist; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, this honorable body also acknowledges Jillian sincere and dedicated activism displayed in so many unique ways to help support and shape the culture in our community in her recently appointed and historical role as Buffalo's first Poet Laureate.

---

**Hon. April N.M. Baskin**  
*Erie County Legislator, 2<sup>nd</sup> District*

---

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