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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois Senate are saddened to learn of the death of Dame Libby Komaiko, professor emeritus of Northeastern Illinois University and founder of the Ensemble Espanol Spanish Dance and Theater, who passed away on February 2, 2019 at Chicago's Illinois Masonic Hospital at the age of 69; and

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WHEREAS, Dame Libby, a native of Evanston, was born in 1949 to parents who were both musicians; she earned her bachelor's degree in the nontraditional degree program at Northeastern Illinois University in 1978; in 1975, she founded the Ensemble Espanol Spanish Dance Theater and built an arts residency program with Northeastern Illinois University, forming the premier Spanish dance and music center in the United States; incorporated in 1976, she then led the fledgling company of seven dancers through decades of growth, change, and exciting opportunities; today, the company is a critically acclaimed performance ensemble that tours national and internationally and provides educational outreach that spans kindergarten to college-level students; for nearly 40 years, the company has continued its mission to present, promote, and preserve the Flamenco, folkloric, classical, and contemporary dance and music traditions of Spain; Dame Libby is recognized as one of the country's most influential figures in artistic distinction

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1 and arts education; and

2 WHEREAS, Dame Libby began her dance training and  
3 performance in classical ballet and character dance as a young  
4 child with Elisa Stigler at the Chicago Musical College of  
5 Roosevelt University; as a teen, she studied and performed  
6 jazz, modern, and musical theater with Gus Giordano; at the age  
7 of 18, she auditioned for the legendary Jose Greco and was  
8 given the opportunity to learn and perform with his world  
9 famous Spanish Dance Company; and

10 WHEREAS, In 1983, the Spanish royal court awarded Dame  
11 Libby with the "Lazo de Dama de Isabel la Catolica", or "Ribbon  
12 of the Dame"; she was the first American and one of only three  
13 choreographers to receive this distinguished honor; she  
14 completed the filming of a video documentary, Ensemble Espanol:  
15 The First 20 years, 1976-1996, in 1998; additional honors  
16 include the Ruth Page Award (2003), the International Latino  
17 Cultural Center Lifetime Achievement Award (2004), and the  
18 inaugural See Chicago Dance Legacy Award in 2017; she produced  
19 a CD of Spanish music and castanets, "Dama Libby and Friends",  
20 which benefits the Ensemble's Youth Scholarship and Endowment  
21 Funds; she taught at Northeastern Illinois University for 37  
22 years; she retired as professor emerita of the Northeastern  
23 Illinois University department of music and dance in 2011 and  
24 received the university's distinguished alumnus award in 2015;

1 and

2 WHEREAS, Northeastern Illinois University and the Ensemble  
3 Espanol Spanish Dance Theater are hosting a memorial to honor  
4 the life and legacy of Dame Libby on April 27, 2019; and

5 WHEREAS, Dame Libby is survived by her sister, Leah  
6 Komaiko; her brothers, Bill and Dan Komaiko; her birth  
7 daughter, Jen Miller; and her birth granddaughter, Amanda  
8 Miller; therefore, be it

9 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL  
10 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we offer our  
11 condolences to the family and friends of Dame Libby Komaiko and  
12 honor the lasting legacy she left for her students, colleagues,  
13 mentees, and many others; and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
15 presented to the family of Dame Libby as an expression of our  
16 deepest sympathy.