



## Legislation Text

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To honor and congratulate the Franklin County Children Services Malaika Mentoring Program on 25 years of dedicated service to African American girls in this community.

**WHEREAS**, the Franklin County Children Services Malaika Program was created on May 15, 1995, as a Mentoring Program for girls 5 to 18 years of age - the program is designed to answer and address the disparities faced by African American girls served by Franklin County Children Services; and

**WHEREAS**, Franklin County Children Services has expanded its commitment to improving the quality of life and outcomes for Black girls; embracing the Commission on Black Girls aim of preventing abuse, neglect, and the intersectionality of racism through the creation of community-level advocacy programs which bridge pathways that positively transform the lives of Black girls and all girls collectively; and

**WHEREAS**, over the years, Franklin County Children Services has become acutely aware of the risk factors for African American girls involved in the child welfare system - the data shows that there are significantly higher birth rates for teens ages 10 to 19 years of age, in fact, the rate of infant births is more than double for females 18 years and younger - this leads to an over-representation of females being served by Franklin County Children Services; there is also an over-representation of children in foster care as well as lower graduation rates; and

**WHEREAS**, with this understanding, Franklin County Children Services has been providing volunteer and mentoring services to enrich the lives of children being served in Columbus and Central Ohio for more than 50 years - FCCS recognizes that youth mentorship programs help young people to improve their self-esteem and enhance their relationships with family members and peers, ultimately helping them to feel a greater sense of connectedness with their community and their schools - caring mentors offer youth valuable support, guiding them toward making positive, healthy life choices - mentoring programs also offer effective student interventions, improving student attendance and behavior, academic performance, increase High School Graduation rates, and in a significant number of instances culminate in college attendance; and

**WHEREAS**, the Malaika Program matches African American girls on a one-on-one basis with community based African American women who provide support and encouragement - the program helps girls to improve their self-esteem, establish academic excellence strategies, explore their career goals, and helps girls to develop a framework for their future; and

**WHEREAS**, the Malaika Program recognizes the power of positive relationships - Malaika mentors are unapologetic about advocating, empowering, and supporting African American girls - the program is committed to easing the transition of girls into womanhood; and

**WHEREAS**, Malaika, means "angel" in Swahili - a term synonymous with the legacy of Sharon Burks, the founding Director of the Malaika Mentoring Program whose leadership has helped the program evolve over the last 25 years - the program continues to be a beacon of hope for African American girls - in 2015, the Malaika Advisory Committee with the support of the Franklin County Children Services Citizens Advisory Committee and Board of Trustees established the SOAR Community Service Award to honor Sharon's work and commitment - the Malaika Mentorship Program under her direction and selfless service has continuously reached back and lifted up angels who at the time were often unaware of

the heights to which they were able to soar; and

**WHEREAS**, The SOAR award was created to recognize members of the community who are champions for African American girls - SOAR stands for **S**pirited advocate for African American girls, **O**utstanding commitment to community building, **A**uthentic character, and **R**esounding passion - characteristics used to describe Sharon and the many volunteers of the Malaika Mentoring Program; now therefore,

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:** That this Council does hereby honor and congratulate the Franklin County Children Services Malaika Mentoring Program on 25 years of dedicated service to African American girls in this community.