

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 249

By Marsh

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate the Unity School Lions boys' basketball team upon winning the TMSAA Class A state championship.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause in its deliberations to recognize and honor those student-athletes who, through hard work and commitment to excellence, have attained the highest levels of success in their respective sports; and

WHEREAS, the Unity School Lions boys' basketball team is one such exemplary group of young men who reached an extraordinary level of success in winning the 2025 Tennessee Middle School Athletic Association (TMSAA) Class A state championship; and

WHEREAS, the Lions' 42-40 victory against the defending state champions from West Junior High School in the state final on February 15, 2025, completed a run through a veritable gauntlet of elite basketball programs, with their impressive 28-2 season record including wins against the 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024 state champions during the sectional and state tournaments; and

WHEREAS, the team's comeback victory during the state championship game was emblematic of the remarkable resilience, teamwork, and mental and physical toughness the Lions displayed time after time during the season; and

WHEREAS, the 2024-2025 Unity Lions won not only the first state championship in the school's thirty-three-year history but also Lincoln County's first basketball state championship at any level and first middle school state championship in any sport; and

WHEREAS, the Lions were a true team who placed collective success above all individual goals, with that focus also providing the opportunity for team members to shine; and

WHEREAS, returning starters Graham Ashby, Colt Bryan, Colby Groce, and Lawrence Guthrie all earned recognition on the All-Conference, All-Area, and All-Sectional teams; after being the sixth man on Unity's 2023-2024 Sweet Sixteen team, Samuel Bryan ascended to the starting lineup and without fail had huge performances in the season's most important games and moments; and

WHEREAS, the other varsity Lions who excelled on the court during this championship season included eighth graders Will Byrd, Lawson Honey, Beau Watt, and Brody Wilson; seventh graders Jayce Jean and Hezzie Phelps; and sixth grader Maddox Groce; and

WHEREAS, junior varsity Lions Beau Bradford, Silas Bryan, Fletcher Byrd, Lincoln Caldwell, Heath Cunningham, Bentley Eakes, Silas Fugate, Garrett Marks, Walker McCain, and Jed Watt also earned the title of state champions by pushing their varsity teammates daily in practice and bringing remarkable sideline energy in games; and

WHEREAS, the Lions were led by Coach Stephen Bryan, whose calm demeanor, in-game adjustments, conditioning sessions, and inbounds-play wizardry were the stuff of legend; and

WHEREAS, under Coach Bryan, Principal Bridgette Jones, Assistant Principal Carrie Bradford, and Athletics Director Jennifer Medley, the Lions have grown not only as leaders on the basketball court but throughout their community, where they prominently serve in the Unity Student Council, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and Beta Club and are key members of the baseball, football, Scholars' Bowl, soccer, and tennis teams; and

WHEREAS, the Lions were empowered by remarkable support from their community, who traveled en masse to every postseason game and filled the gymnasium at the state tournament in Murfreesboro; and

WHEREAS, during this incredible season, the members of the Unity Lions etched their names into the annals of Tennessee sports history, and the character, perseverance,

determination, work ethic, and talent that made possible a championship season also surely bode well for their future success; these young men have inspired their community and serve as exceptional ambassadors of the State of Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and congratulate the Unity School Lions boys' basketball team upon winning the 2025 TMSAA Class A state championship, salute these exceptional student-athletes for their many accomplishments, both on and off the court, and extend to them our best wishes for much continued success in all their future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.