

1 A RESOLUTION honoring the George Rogers Clark High School Cardinals, 2026
2 Kentucky High School Athletic Association Boys' Sweet Sixteen Basketball Champions.

3 WHEREAS, on March 21, 2026, before a crowd of 11,780 fans at Lexington's
4 Rupp Arena, the George Rogers Clark (GRC) Cardinals defeated the St. Xavier High
5 School Tigers by a score of 58-50 in overtime to win the 2026 Kentucky High School
6 Athletic Association (KHSAA) Boys' Sweet Sixteen Basketball Championship; and

7 WHEREAS, the championship was the third in school history, with the Cardinals
8 also winning the championship in 1951 and 2022. The Cardinals also finished as state
9 runners-up in 2023; and

10 WHEREAS, combined with the George Rogers Clark Girls' Basketball team
11 winning the Girls' Sweet Sixteen just one week prior to the boys' championship, GRC
12 became only the second school in Kentucky high school athletics history to win the Boys'
13 and Girls' Sweet Sixteen in the same year, repeating the feat of Ashland High School in
14 1928; and

15 WHEREAS, the Cardinals trailed by four at the end of the first quarter of the
16 championship game, and clawed their way back to eventually tie the game at 44 at the
17 end of regulation. In the overtime period, the Cardinals scored all 14 of their points from
18 the free throw line, with senior point guard Malachi Ashford going 9 for 10 from the
19 charity stripe, to grab an early lead that the team never relinquished; and

20 WHEREAS, the championship game win capped off an incredible season that
21 ended with a record of 33 wins against only 4 losses, with an average margin of victory
22 of 19 points per game. The Cardinals bounced back from adversity late in the season after
23 losing to Montgomery County in the 40th District championship game, by defeating the
24 Indians in the regional final on their road to the state title; and

25 WHEREAS, the Cardinals were led by Malachi Ashford, who averaged 13 points
26 per game in the tournament and was named Most Valuable Player of the Sweet Sixteen.
27 Ashford was joined on the All-Tournament team by teammates Montez Gay, a junior

1 who averaged 13.3 points per game, and senior Amari Bartelson, who averaged 10.5
2 points per game; and

3 WHEREAS, other members of the Cardinals included seniors Sebastian Anthony
4 and Matthew Pasley; juniors Haddon Cecil, JaMylyn Johnson, and Deshaun Gay; and
5 sophomores Ryder Akins, Cole Fithen, Walker Gaines, Jaymeir Jenkins, Carter Muzic,
6 and CJ Thomas; and

7 WHEREAS, the Cardinals were guided to the championship by Head Coach Josh
8 Cook, who, in 10 seasons has compiled a record of 280 wins against 58 losses, with
9 seven 40th District championships, five 10th Region titles, and two Sweet Sixteen
10 Championships; and

11 WHEREAS, Cook was aided on the bench by assistant coaches Ryan Ashcraft,
12 Shawn Thacker, Jacob Rice, Dylan James, Joseph Gomes, and Austin Curtis; and

13 WHEREAS, after the game, Cook referenced the loss in the district championship
14 as a catalyst for his team: "After that game, we got tougher. I'm probably thankful for
15 that loss. Without that, we don't figure out who we need to be. These guys, adversity
16 made them state champions."; and

17 WHEREAS, the stellar play, teamwork, and discipline shown by the George Rogers
18 Clark Cardinals in winning the 2026 Sweet Sixteen, combined with the school's rare
19 sweep of the boys' and girls' crowns, are a moment in Kentucky high school sports
20 history that will never be forgotten is worthy of celebration;

21 NOW, THEREFORE,

22 ***Be it resolved by the Senate of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of***
23 ***Kentucky:***

24 ➔Section 1. The members of the Senate join Senator Greg Elkins in
25 congratulating the George Rogers Clark Cardinals upon the occasion of winning the 2026
26 KHSAA Boys' Sweet Sixteen Basketball Championship, applauding the team's stellar
27 play, and wishing all team members and coaches good fortune in their future endeavors.

- 1 ➔Section 2. The Clerk of the Senate is directed to transmit a copy of this
- 2 Resolution to Senator Greg Elkins for presentation to the team.