

House Resolution 1239

By: Representatives Cannon of the 58th, Hugley of the 141st, Davis of the 87th, Schofield of the 63rd, and Au of the 50th

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing March 14 as Black Midwives Day in the State of Georgia; and for other
2 purposes.

3 WHEREAS, there has been a resurgence in the use of midwifery care over the past several
4 years; and

5 WHEREAS, whether because of fear of hospitals or a desire to experience birth with fewer
6 interventions, midwifery care has rapidly grown in popularity in a short period of time; and

7 WHEREAS, according to the United States Government Accountability Office, in 2023, the
8 number of midwifery attended births rose from 9.6 percent in 2016 to 11.9 percent in 2021,
9 and it is estimated that an increase in midwifery led care has the potential to decrease
10 stillbirths by 26 percent, maternal deaths by 41 percent, and neonatal deaths by 39 percent;
11 and

12 WHEREAS, the institution of midwifery has a huge debt to pay to the legacy of Black
13 Granny midwives in this country; and

14 WHEREAS, African women who were forcibly kidnapped and enslaved upon their arrival
15 in this country brought with them their traditions of healing and midwifery, and prior to the
16 Civil War, these midwives were responsible for bringing the babies of enslaved women into
17 this world, as well as the babies of their slave masters; and

18 WHEREAS, after emancipation, many of these midwives continued to practice within their
19 communities and became known as Granny Midwives; and

20 WHEREAS, they were prominent in southern states, including South Carolina, North
21 Carolina, Alabama, Louisiana, Tennessee, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Texas, Florida, Missouri,
22 Arkansas, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and Georgia, and during that period, Granny
23 Midwives attended more than two-thirds of black births in eight of the above-mentioned
24 states, including Georgia; and

25 WHEREAS, in 1930, there were 3,000 registered midwives in Georgia, but unfortunately,
26 those numbers have significantly declined for a multitude of reasons; and

27 WHEREAS, as the field of obstetrics grew, so did the efforts to legislate Granny Midwives
28 out of practice. The Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Protection Act, which was
29 passed by the United States Congress in 1921, made training and licensing a requirement to
30 practice midwifery; and

31 WHEREAS, Black midwives who had been central to the health of their communities were
32 now being seen as unsanitary and responsible for infant and maternal deaths, and this act also
33 created barriers to education, further decreasing the numbers of Black midwives in this
34 country; and

35 WHEREAS, Black midwives are paramount to improving maternal and infant health
36 outcomes in the Black community, but, unfortunately, Black Women are only 7 percent of
37 the midwifery workforce of Certified Midwives and Certified Nurse Midwives in the United
38 States; and

39 WHEREAS, to fix the maternal and infant health disparities that exist amongst Black
40 mothers and Birthing People, we must engage in Sankofa, an Akan word from Ghana that
41 means "go back and get it" or "go back and retrieve it," with "it" being the legacy and history
42 of African midwives, traditional midwives, and Granny midwives in this country; and

43 WHEREAS, in honor of this rich history and the legacy of so many of these women who
44 have touched our bloodlines, March 14 should be recognized as Black Midwives Day in the
45 State of Georgia.

46 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
47 the members of this body recognize March 14 as Black Midwives Day in the State of
48 Georgia.

49 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
50 and directed to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to the
51 public and the press.