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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

SENATE RESOLUTION

PROCLAIMING FEBRUARY OF 2024, AS "BLACK HISTORY MONTH" IN THE STATE
OF RHODE ISLAND

Introduced By: Senator Tiara T. Mack

Date Introduced: March 07, 2024

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1 WHEREAS, Throughout the history of the United States of America, truly significant
2 African-American contributions to the economy, social growth, sciences, and arts in this great
3 nation have all too often been ignored. In recognition of this plethora of major accomplishments
4 made by men and women of African ancestry, the month of February is celebrated as "Black
5 History Month" across the nation; and

6 WHEREAS, It is also vital to understand that every day of every month of every year in
7 the history of our country, significant and historical contributions have been made by African-
8 Americans; and

9 WHEREAS, African-Americans were first brought to America forcibly. They were
10 enslaved, faced inhuman cruelty, and were subjected to injustices beyond understanding. Families
11 were torn apart, lynching went unpunished, and segregation and denial of fundamental
12 constitutional rights and protections went on for decades; and

13 WHEREAS, Though these men and women suffered immense tragedies and social
14 inequalities, they also persevered, and their triumphs and contributions to the economic, artistic,
15 literary, scientific, and technological advancement of our country are significant and momentous;
16 and

17 WHEREAS, African-Americans have been an integral part of Rhode Island's social,
18 political, and economic development from its beginning as a British colony, to its inclusion in the
19 formation of the United States, to the rich diversity of today's Ocean State; and

1 WHEREAS, From the initial shots fired in the struggle for American Independence, to
2 the participation of the Rhode Island 1st Black Regiment in the Battle of Newport, to the garrisons
3 of the Rhode Island 14th Heavy Artillery Regiment (Colored) in 1863, Americans of African
4 descent have responded to the call of duty; and

5 WHEREAS, In recognition of the numerous positive and patriotic contributions of
6 African-American Rhode Islanders in the United States military, we honor their legacy of
7 bravery, honor, and sacrifice. From the earliest recordation of Black History in our state,
8 including those of slaves, former slaves, and free men, African-Americans have served with pride
9 to protect our vital interests and provide for our common defense; and

10 WHEREAS, Structures in the City of Newport, such as the Brick Market, later used as
11 the town hall and theater; the Old Colony House, which at one time served Rhode Island as its
12 capitol; and the oldest library in America, the Redwood Library, stand as lasting and beautiful
13 tributes to the African-Americans who lived in our state and played a major role in the
14 construction of these magnificent historic structures; and

15 WHEREAS, Many African-Americans have made enormous and significant
16 contributions to our nation, from Dr. Martin Luther King, whose eloquent and courageous actions
17 on behalf of freedom and liberty for all earned him the Nobel Peace Prize and started our nation
18 on the long and all-too-slow path towards equality for all, and President Barack Obama our
19 nation's first African-American President, who continued and expanded upon Dr. King's vision
20 through his support for expanding healthcare access for everyone, diversified the federal
21 bureaucracy, strengthened women's right to fair pay, and protected LGBTQ citizens from
22 employment discrimination; and

23 WHEREAS, Other African-Americans who have contributed much to our nation's
24 vibrancy and success include Maya Angelou, the noted poet, civil rights activist, and recipient of
25 the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP and the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President
26 Barack Obama, famed novelist James Baldwin, famous inventor George Washington Carver,
27 Civil Rights activist and educator Mary McLeod Bethune, Congresswoman Shirley Chisolm, the
28 first African-American to run for President of the United States, noted author and abolitionist
29 Frederick Douglass, Doctor Charles Drew, whose research and work on plasma literally saved
30 millions of lives, famous sociologist, writer and activist W.E.B. Du Bois, noted jazz composer
31 and bandleader Duke Ellington, Civil Rights activist Jesse Jackson, film director Spike Lee,
32 famed actors Sidney Poitier and Denzel Washington, the great Hall of Fame baseball player
33 Jackie Robinson, who courageously faced down death threats to integrate Major League Baseball,
34 famous boxers and American heroes Joe Louis and Muhammed Ali, Supreme Court Justice

1 Thurgood Marshall, who, as a lawyer, won the famous Brown v. Board of Education public
2 school desegregation case before the United States Supreme Court, photographer Gordon Parks,
3 Olympic heroes Jesse Owens and Rafer Johnson, Abolition activists Sojourner Truth and Harriet
4 Tubman, and noted educator, Civil Rights activist Booker T. Washington, golf legend Tiger
5 Woods, tennis superstars Serena and Venus Williams and numerous other African-Americans;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, The United States and particularly the State of Rhode Island owe a debt of
8 gratitude to our African-American citizens and their forefathers, whose documented
9 achievements have too long gone unrecognized; and

10 WHEREAS, The theme for 2024 Black History Month is "African Americans and the
11 Arts." "African American art is infused with African, Caribbean and Black American lived
12 experiences" and for more than a century it has had an immense impact on the performing and
13 visual arts, literature, fashion, folklore, language, film, music, architecture, culinary and
14 numerous other forms of cultural expression. African American artists have used their artistic
15 expressions to preserve the rich African American culture and to advance the causes of equality,
16 justice and empowerment; now, therefore be it

17 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby proudly proclaims
18 February as "Black History Month", and furthermore recognizes and applauds the sacrifices and
19 myriad contributions made by African-American men and women throughout this great nation's
20 history; and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
22 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society.

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