A RESOLUTION honoring the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

WHEREAS, Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., dedicated his life to securing our Nation’s fundamental principles of liberty and justice for all; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King was ordained in the Christian ministry in February 1948 at the age of 19 at Ebenezer Baptist Church, in Atlanta, Georgia, and became Assistant Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, in 1954, Dr. King accepted the call of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, where he served as pastor until November 1959, when he resigned to move back to Atlanta to lead the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); and

WHEREAS, from 1960 until his death in 1968, Dr. King remained in Atlanta and served as a pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church along with his father; and

WHEREAS, in order to observe, reflect, and celebrate the fullness of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s legacy, we must take up and reckon with Dr. King’s rejection of the economic status quo and shift toward economic justice; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King believed that without economic justice, the people previously excluded from full participation in society would never fully achieve the promises and remedies guaranteed them by the Civil Rights Act of 1964; and

WHEREAS, in his quest to achieve economic justice, Dr. King, along with Marion Wright and the SCLC, launched the Poor People’s Campaign as the beginning of a new campaign of cooperation, understanding, and determination by people living in poverty to assert and win their right to a decent life, full of dignity and respect; and

WHEREAS, at the conception of the Poor People's Campaign, Dr. King organized 2,000 people living in poverty to go to northern and southern states, and to Washington, D.C., to meet with government officials to demand jobs, unemployment insurance, a fair minimum wage, and education for adults and children living in poverty; and

WHEREAS, on May 12, 1968, roughly one month after the assassination of Dr.
King, Mrs. Coretta Scott King led thousands of women to advance the Poor People’s Campaign, and one day later Resurrection City was erected on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., where, over the course of the next month, demonstrators outlasted the staggering heat and demanded economic opportunity at different federal agencies; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the 1968 Poor People’s Campaign, 200 counties received free surplus food distribution and some federal agencies agreed to hire people living in poverty to lead programs that directly impacted their communities; and

WHEREAS, the Poor People’s Campaign continues today, advocating for their Declaration of Rights and the Poor People’s Moral Agenda, which tackles systemic racism, poverty and inequality, ecological devastation, national morality, and war economy and militarism; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King’s economic justice work remains unfinished today, and state legislatures must commit to and reaffirm their charge to manifest and actualize the fullness of Dr. King’s dream; and

WHEREAS, according to the Institute for Economic and Racial Equity at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University, "policy drives the racial wealth gap," meaning "policy changes rather than behavioral changes" are the key in closing the wealth gap across racial groups; and

WHEREAS, as legislators who craft state policy, general assemblies must ensure that the policies they create do not exacerbate, but instead shrink the existing disparities; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic amplified and worsened the existing wealth inequalities across racial groups; and

WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Census, in 2020 the poverty rate increased from 2019 to 11.4%, with approximately 37.2 million people living in poverty, an increase of 3.3 million people; and

WHEREAS, the poverty rate for children under 18 was 16.1% in 2020; and
WHEREAS, 19.5% of Black people in the United States live in poverty, the highest rate of poverty across racial groups; and
WHEREAS, some of the southern states with the highest poverty rates according to *Forbes* are:

- Mississippi: 20.3% of its population lives below the poverty line;
- Louisiana: 19.2% of its population lives below the poverty line;
- West Virginia: 17.6% of its population lives below the poverty line;
- Kentucky: 17.3% of its population lives below the poverty line;
- Arkansas: 17.0% of its population lives below the poverty line;
- Alabama: 16.7% of its population lives below the poverty line;
- Tennessee: 15.2% of its population lives below the poverty line;
- South Carolina: 15.2% of its population lives below the poverty line; and
WHEREAS, the real median household income for Black people, at $45,870, is the lowest across all racial groups, and is $10,000 less than the next group; and
WHEREAS, based on the U.S. Census, the real median household income for Black people is $29,000 less than the average real median household income; and
WHEREAS, according to U.S. Census data, the median net worth for Black households is $20,730, while the net worth of non-Hispanic White households is $181,440, and Black households have the lowest wealth attainment across the groups observed; and
WHEREAS, as of January 2022, Black unemployment is up to 7% while national unemployment is down to 3.9%;

NOW, THEREFORE,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

Section 1. The members of the House of Representatives honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and urge all Kentuckians to shape their lives by
those holy tenets of kindness, peace, and equality.

Section 2. The Kentucky General Assembly will commit to supporting legislation that will champion the fullness of Dr. King's legacy and bring equity and fair opportunities for Black economic justice.

Section 3. The Clerk of the House of Representatives is directed to transmit a copy of this Resolution to Representative Attica Scott.