

1 A RESOLUTION honoring the 22nd Black History Celebration and recognizing
2 that Black history is American history.

3 WHEREAS, in 1776, people envisioned the United States as a new nation dedicated
4 to the proposition stated in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created
5 equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among
6 these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"; and

7 WHEREAS, Africans were first brought involuntarily to the shores of the United
8 States as early as the 17th century; and

9 WHEREAS, African Americans suffered enslavement and subsequently faced the
10 injustices of lynch mobs, segregation, and denial of the basic and fundamental rights of
11 citizenship; and

12 WHEREAS, in 2026, the vestiges of those injustices and inequalities remain
13 evident in the society of the United States; and

14 WHEREAS, in the face of injustices, people of good will and of all races in the
15 United States have distinguished themselves with a commitment to the noble ideals on
16 which the United States was founded and have fought courageously for the rights and
17 freedom of African Americans and others; and

18 WHEREAS, the contributions of African Americans from all walks of life
19 throughout the history of the United States reflect the greatness of the United States; and

20 WHEREAS, many African Americans lived, toiled, and died in obscurity, never
21 achieving the recognition those individuals deserved, and yet they paved the way for
22 future generations to succeed; and

23 WHEREAS, African Americans continue to serve the United States at the highest
24 levels of business, government, and the military; and

25 WHEREAS, the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass inspired the
26 creation of Negro History Week, the precursor to Black History Month; and

27 WHEREAS, Negro History Week represented the culmination of the efforts of Dr.

1 Carter G. Woodson, the "Father of Black History," to enhance knowledge of Black
2 history through The Journal of Negro History, published by the Association for the Study
3 of African American Life and History, which was founded by Dr. Carter G. Woodson
4 and Jesse E. Moorland; and

5 WHEREAS, in 1926, Dr. Carter G. Woodson proposed and launched a weeklong
6 celebration of the individuals and occasions having a significant impact on African
7 American history, and has since been known as the "Father of Black History"; and

8 WHEREAS, Dr. Carter G. Woodson had ties to the Commonwealth, working in the
9 Kentucky coal mines as a child. The son of former slaves, he enrolled in high school at
10 the age of 20 and went on to graduate from Berea College with a bachelor's degree,
11 receive his master's degree from the University of Chicago, and earn a Ph.D. from
12 Harvard University, where he was one of the first scholars to study African American
13 history; and

14 WHEREAS, Dr. Carter G. Woodson stated, "We have a wonderful history behind
15 us... If you are unable to demonstrate to the world that you have this record, the world
16 will say to you, 'You are not worthy to enjoy the blessings of democracy or anything
17 else.'"; and

18 WHEREAS, since its founding, the United States has imperfectly progressed
19 toward noble goals; and

20 WHEREAS, the history of the United States is the story of people regularly
21 affirming high ideals, striving to reach those ideals but often failing, and then struggling
22 to come to terms with the disappointment of that failure, before committing to try again;
23 and

24 WHEREAS, during the month of February 2026, across the United States of
25 America and this great Commonwealth, observances are held to increase public
26 awareness of the importance of Black history and the contributions that African
27 Americans have made toward this country; and

1 WHEREAS, in 2026, the Kentucky Black Legislative Caucus and all Kentuckians
2 pause to recognize and reflect on the accomplishments African Americans have made in
3 this Commonwealth and across the nation throughout each year and throughout the
4 history of this nation, and in so doing we commemorate our 22nd annual Black History
5 Celebration; and

6 WHEREAS, Dr. Roger Cleveland will serve as this year's keynote speaker. Dr.
7 Cleveland is a transformational leader, groundbreaking educator, and researcher in the
8 fields of diversity, equity, cultural humility, and academic innovation. Through his work,
9 he has partnered with hundreds of school districts, universities, agencies, and companies.
10 He currently resides in Lexington, Kentucky, with his wife, Audra, and his children,
11 Maya, Taylor, and Dorian; and

12 WHEREAS, Dr. Cleveland has spent over 20 years in K-12 and higher education.
13 He was the Director of the Division of Equity and Federal Programs at the Kentucky
14 Department of Education. Dr. Cleveland's teaching expertise has allowed him to educate
15 students at Morehead State University, the University of Kentucky (adjunct), Middle
16 Tennessee State University, Kentucky State University, and Eastern Kentucky
17 University; and

18 WHEREAS, Dr. Cleveland has published several equity, inclusion, and education-
19 related articles. He has hosted numerous nationwide equity, leadership, and
20 organizational workshops and lectures. Dr. Cleveland is Chair of the Board of Directors
21 of the nationally known Black Males Working Academy, a program focused on college
22 and career readiness through academics, social-emotional learning, and leadership for
23 African-American males in grades K-12; and

24 WHEREAS, Dr. Cleveland was appointed to the Health Disparity and Equity
25 Technical Advisory Committee by Governor Andy Beshear. He is also a member of the
26 Morehead State University Alumni Hall of Fame and the Jefferson County Public
27 Schools' Equity Hall of Fame. Dr. Cleveland is a proud member of Kappa Alpha Psi

1 Fraternity Incorporated; and

2 WHEREAS, Dr. Cleveland has received a host of recognitions and awards. He was
3 inducted into the Kentucky Civil Rights Hall of Fame in 2014; in 2013 he was awarded
4 the P.G. Peeples Equity and Excellence Achievement Award from the Fayette County
5 Equity Council for his work in improving local schools; he was named the 2012
6 Professor of the Year by the Kentucky Association of Blacks in Higher Education; and he
7 was recognized with the "Teachers Making a Difference" award at Eastern Kentucky
8 University; and

9 WHEREAS, speakers for the event also include Senate Democratic Floor Leader
10 Gerald A. Neal, House Democratic Floor Leader Pamela Stevenson, Lt. Governor
11 Jacqueline Coleman, Chief Justice Debra Hembree Lambert, Senate Majority Whip
12 Robby Mills, and Commission on Race and Access to Opportunity Co-chair, Rep. Kevin
13 Jackson; and

14 WHEREAS, we all recognize that Black history is American history; and

15 WHEREAS, not only during the month of February but throughout the year, it is
16 important that we know our history to beneficially meet the challenges of now, and, into
17 the future, we must understand what brought us to this moment; and

18 WHEREAS, the citizens of this great Commonwealth should recommit themselves
19 to an ideal America where equality and justice will always prevail, and to the principles
20 of love, wisdom, and compassion toward one another;

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, individually and collectively, hereby
25 celebrate Black History and the 22nd annual Black History Celebration, and:

26 (1) Acknowledge that all people of this Commonwealth and the United States are
27 the recipients of the wealth of history provided by Black culture;

1 (2) Recognize the importance of Black history as an opportunity to reflect on the
2 complex history, while remaining hopeful and confident about the path ahead;

3 (3) Acknowledge the significance of the Black history as an important
4 opportunity to commemorate the tremendous contributions of African Americans to the
5 history of the United States and this great Commonwealth;

6 (4) Encourage the celebration of Black history to provide a continuing
7 opportunity for all people to learn from the past and understand the experiences that have
8 shaped the United States and this great Commonwealth; and

9 (5) Move forward with purpose, united tirelessly as a nation "indivisible, with
10 liberty and justice for all."

11 ➔Section 2. The Clerk of the Senate is directed to transmit a copy of this
12 Resolution to Senator Gerald A. Neal.