

2020 -- H 8074

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LC005473  
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING AND HONORING AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY IN RHODE ISLAND  
AND URGING THE ADOPTION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION IN RHODE  
ISLAND'S K-12 SCHOOLS, STARTING IN THE 2022-2023 ACADEMIC YEAR.

Introduced By: Representatives Ranglin-Vassell, Williams, Almeida, Abney, and Filippi

Date Introduced: June 18, 2020

Referred To: House read and passed

1           WHEREAS, Rhode Island holds a unique place in history with the establishment of its  
2 Royal Charter on July 8, 1663, that marked the first time that a sovereign leader signed a charter  
3 guaranteeing that individuals within a society were free to practice the religion of their choice  
4 without any interference from the government; and

5           WHEREAS, As Rhode Island became the first American Colony to declare its  
6 independence from Great Britain on May 4, 1776, it was also at the same time in history, one of  
7 the most active slave ports in British North America transporting thousands of enslaved Africans  
8 to the Colony, with the first documented slave ship arriving at Newport in 1696; and

9           WHEREAS, The contributions of African Heritage people from all walks of life and their  
10 endeavors to learn and thrive throughout history and make unforgettable marks in our State and  
11 Nation as artists, scientists, educators, business people, influential thinkers, members of the faith  
12 community, athletes, and political and governmental leaders, reflects the greatness of the State of  
13 Rhode Island; and

14           WHEREAS, The 1696 Historical Commission was signed into law on July 1, 2014, and  
15 was tasked with developing a comprehensive African American history curriculum for Rhode  
16 Island public schools from kindergarten through grade 12 and said Commission led by our  
17 Secretary of State and comprised of scholars, civic and educational leaders, developed and  
18 submitted a comprehensive report that included units of instruction and educational resources;  
19 and

1           WHEREAS, As an important resource for building history curriculum, the Rhode Island  
2 Black Heritage Society, the oldest African Heritage society, has an extensive collection of  
3 documents, photographs, and artifacts from the African Heritage people of Rhode Island and  
4 works in collaboration with other historical societies across the State; and

5           WHEREAS, With the unifying call for Black Lives Matter, racial reconciliation, social  
6 justice, and citizen equity being reflected across the state, nation and world, the establishment of  
7 an African Heritage history curriculum in Rhode Island is long overdue; now, therefore be it

8           RESOLVED, That the Rhode Island House of Representatives, remaining hopeful and  
9 confident about the path ahead, and to acknowledge the courageous fight for the rights, liberties,  
10 and freedoms for all Americans, encourages all citizens, educators, students, and families across  
11 the city and state to learn about the heritage and achievements of African Americans through  
12 appropriate educational programs and learning experiences; and be it further

13           RESOLVED, That this House urges every school district in Rhode Island to include in  
14 its curriculum a unit of instruction on African American history, utilizing, but not being limited  
15 to, the materials collected and disseminated by the Department of Education in collaboration with  
16 state historical institutions, commencing with the 2022-2023 school year; and be it further

17           RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to  
18 transmit duly certified copies of this this Resolution to all other Rhode Island cities, towns and  
19 school committees urging them to adopt similar resolutions and support this worthwhile learning  
20 endeavor.

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