

BY: Senator COMRIE

MEMORIALIZING Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim
June 2017, as Caribbean American Heritage Month in
the State of New York

WHEREAS, The fabric of our Nation has been woven together and enriched by the diversity of our people; our legacy as a Nation of immigrants is part of what makes America strong, and during National Caribbean-American Heritage Month, we celebrate the rich history and vibrant culture Caribbean Americans have brought to our shores; and

WHEREAS, Immigrants from Caribbean countries have come to America for centuries, including from Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Caribbean Netherlands, also known as the Kingdom of the Netherlands which includes the countries of Aruba, Cura-cao, and Saint Maarten; Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Anguilla (UK), Cayman Islands (UK), Guadeloupe (France), Martinique (France), Montserrat (UK), Puerto Rico

(US), Saint Barthelemy (France), Saint Martin (France), Turks and Caicos Islands (UK), United States Virgin Islands (Saint Croix, Saint John, Saint Thomas) (US), and immigrants from the mainland continents of North and South America and also including Guyana, Belize, Honduras, Suriname, Costa Rica and Panama, which due to their close cultural connection, have been accepted as part of the family of Caribbean countries; and

WHEREAS, Immigrants from Caribbean countries came to America through the bondage of slavery, while others willfully left behind the world they knew in search of a better life; regardless of the circumstances of their arrival, they had faith their descendants would have a chance to realize their greatest potential; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 2017, as Caribbean American Heritage Month in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of National Caribbean-American Heritage Month; and

WHEREAS, With the United States Senate approval on February 14, 2006, and a presidential proclamation on June 5, 2006, June has become National Caribbean-American Heritage Month; with this, the "colonization" of the Caribbean by the United States has been recorded in American History; this particular legislation, first introduced in the House in 2004 by Congresswoman Barbara Lee, celebrates the contributions of the Caribbean-Americans to American life and culture; and

WHEREAS, New York State has been, and continues to be, the home to many distinguished people of Caribbean ancestry who have made their mark

in history as pertinent figures in their field, and who have succeeded; these figures from the 14th Senate District include: Sheryl Lee Ralph, is an American actress, singer, and advocate who was raised in both

Mandeville, Jamaica, and Long Island; Nicki Minaj, born as Onika Tanya Maraj, is a Trinidadian-born American rapper, singer, songwriter and model; Shaggy, born Orville Richard Burrell is a Jamaican-American reggae fusion singer and deejay; Tyson Beckford, an American fashion model and actor, lived in Jamaica until the age of seven; Trevor George Smith, Jr., otherwise known as Busta Rhymes, is an American rapper, actor, record producer and record executive; Kerry Washington, an American actress, can trace her roots to African slaves from the Caribbean; the son of Jamaican immigrant parents, Colin Powell is an American statesman and a retired four-star general in the United States Army; and Zoe Saldana, an American actress and dancer, is of Dominican descent; and

WHEREAS, There are also many businesses within the Queens communities which have proudly honored their Caribbean heritage such as The Door restaurant, located in Jamaica, New York; this upscale establishment offers its customers jerk chicken, oxtail, escovitch, other Jamaican specialties; VP Records is an independent record label, located in Queens; the label is known for releasing music by notable artists in reggae, dancehall and soca; and

WHEREAS, Each year, New York State proudly celebrates Caribbean heritage with the West Indian-American Day Carnival which is a weekend of cultural activities, culminating with the Labor Day Parade down Eastern Parkway in Crown Heights, Brooklyn; this annual parade attracts between one and three million participants, and spectators along the parade route; and

WHEREAS, The Labor Day Parade is New York City's largest parade, and is a great contributor to the economy, as it generates over \$300 million in revenue to both State and local government and is among New York's biggest tourist attractions; and

WHEREAS, Caribbean Americans have prospered in every sector of our society and enhanced our national character while maintaining the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural traditions of their homelands; they are doctors and lawyers, public servants and scientists, and athletes and service members; their successes inspire individuals in the United States and abroad, and we take pride in the contributions Caribbean Americans continue to make to the narrative of our Nation's progress; their achievements are born of hard work and ambition; and

WHEREAS, During Caribbean American Heritage Month, we also recognize the important friendship between the United States and the countries of the Caribbean as we expand our partnership to promote economic development, democratic governance, citizen security, and improved health and education in the region; and

WHEREAS, Additionally, as Haiti continues to recover from 2010's devastating earthquake, we remain committed to standing beside the people of Haiti as they rebuild their proud nation, and to working with

others in the region to bring lasting prosperity and stability to the country; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 2017, as Caribbean American Heritage Month in the State of New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York.