

BY: Senator KAPLAN

CONGRATULATING Elaine Gross upon the occasion of her retirement after 20 years of distinguished service as President of ERASE Racism

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and honor those distinguished citizens of this great Empire State who have devoted themselves to faithfully serving the best interests of their community and the needs of its residents; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to congratulate Elaine Gross upon the occasion of her retirement after 20 years of distinguished service as President of ERASE Racism; and

WHEREAS, As Founder and President of ERASE Racism, Elaine Gross has led this vital organization to prominence as a champion of fair housing, publishing research reports, undertaking litigation, advocating policy changes and heightening public understanding of the context of structural racism as it relates to housing discrimination and segregation; and

WHEREAS, Under the able leadership of Elaine Gross, ERASE Racism also brought to public attention its authoritative research on school segregation, including creating an infographic revealing that segregation in Long Island's public schools is still growing; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, she has led efforts which have amended and strengthened local fair housing laws and oversaw the organization's successful litigation in Nassau and Suffolk counties against property owners and management companies who discriminated in showing rental apartments, based on race; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, Elaine Gross started the statewide campaign which led to New York's 2019 enactment of a ban on housing discrimination against people who depend on legal non-wage sources of income for their rent; that campaign grew to include more than 100 organizations; and

WHEREAS, Elaine Gross has similarly provided the vision and programmatic leadership for ERASE Racism's Education Equity Initiative, which works collaboratively with educators, students and parents to take strategic actions to support the promotion of racially integrated schools and classrooms; and

WHEREAS, Throughout her illustrious career, Elaine Gross has led educational and policy advocacy campaigns to promote culturally responsive sustaining education, educator diversity, and restorative justice practices; she also created such ERASE Racism services as Education Equity Seminars and Leadership Development Programs for educators, students and parents; and

WHEREAS, Additionally, she supervised the creation of the award-winning documentary "A Tale of Two Schools: Race and Education on Long Island"; and

WHEREAS, To enhance public awareness and the context in which policymaking takes place, Elaine Gross elevated public engagement on the crucial topic of racial equity in the region; in 2018, she launched the ongoing, region-wide, public initiative "How Do We Build a Just Long Island?"; the initiative began with five public forums across Long Island and continues to involve Long Islanders in exploring issues related to structural racism and implicit bias and in participating in legislative and policy actions; and

WHEREAS, Elaine Gross has frequently delivered speeches to government, nonprofit and business groups, as well as colleges and universities; she has published opinion articles and appears regularly in influential media; and

WHEREAS, A member of the Long Island Regional Economic Development Council, Elaine Gross has been the proud recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award of Long Island Business News, among other honors; and

WHEREAS, Prior to launching the ERASE Racism Initiative, which became an independent not-for-profit corporation in 2004, Elaine Gross served as Founding Executive Director of Sustainable America, Program Officer at the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock, Deputy Director of the Boston Housing Partnership, and Human Services Director at the Boston Housing Authority; and

WHEREAS, Elaine Gross graduated from Boston University, where she earned her MSW with a focus on community organizing, policy, planning and non-profit management; and

WHEREAS, Rare indeed is the occurrence of such a compassionate blending of strength, leadership, intellect, and commitment as that demonstrated by Elaine Gross over a lifetime of sacrifice and dedication to others; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to congratulate Elaine Gross upon the occasion of her retirement, and to wish her continued success in all her future endeavors; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Elaine Gross.