

BY: Senator BAILEY

MOURNING the death of Hammerin' Hank Aaron,
long-standing Home Run King for Major League
Baseball, role model and humanitarian

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to acknowledge outstanding athletes who distinguish themselves through their exceptional performance, attaining unprecedented success and the highest level of personal achievement; and

WHEREAS, It is with great sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Hank Aaron, noting the significance of his purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Widely regarded as one of the most significant and celebrated sporting figures of the 20th Century, Hank Aaron died on Friday, January 22, 2021, at his home in Atlanta, Georgia, at the age of 86; and

WHEREAS, Henry Louis Aaron was born to Estella (Pritchett) and Herbert Aaron, Sr. on February 5, 1934, in Mobile, Alabama, and grew up in the neighborhood of Toulminville, where he practiced his swing with things he found on the streets; and

WHEREAS, Hank Aaron was a Boy Scout and attended Central High School as a freshman and a sophomore, and played outfield and third base for the Mobile Black Bears, an independent Negro league team, where he quickly established himself as a long ball threat; and

WHEREAS, At the young age of 15, Hank Aaron tried out for the Brooklyn Dodgers; although he did not make the team, it sparked the fire for his later career; he went back to school and attended the Josephine Allen Institute, followed by Central High School; during his junior year, he played for the Pritchett Athletics, and once again, the Mobile Black Bears; and

WHEREAS, On November 20, 1951, Hank Aaron signed with the Indianapolis Clowns of the Negro American League, where he played for three months; during this time, he recorded a .366 batting average in 26 games, with five home runs, 33 RBI, 41 hits, and nine stolen bases; and

WHEREAS, The slugger's exemplary play drew attention from two Major League Baseball (MLB) teams, the New York Giants, and the Boston Braves, the team he would ultimately sign with; he was assigned to the Braves' Northern League Class-C farm team, the Eau Claire Bears, and continued to excel at the bat and in the field; and

WHEREAS, At the end of the season, Hank Aaron was selected to the Northern League's All-Star team and was named Rookie of the Year; in his 87 games, he logged a .336 batting average, scored 89 runs, and had 116 hits, nine home runs, and 61 RBI; and

WHEREAS, In 1953, the Braves promoted Hank Aaron to the Jacksonville Braves, their Class-A affiliate in the South Atlantic League, and once again, he proved his worth by helping the team win the league championship that year; he led the league in runs (115), hits (208), doubles (36), RBI (125), total bases (338), and batting average (.362), and won the league's Most Valuable Player Award; and

WHEREAS, In that same year, Hank Aaron's personal life was also at a high when he married the former Barbara Lucas on October 6th, and together, they raised four children; on November 13, 1973, he married his second wife, Billye Suber Williams and they had one child; and

WHEREAS, In 1954, Hank Aaron signed a major league contract with the Milwaukee Braves and began with a rocky start; after changing his uniform number from five to 44, his luck took a turn, and he never looked back, hitting .314 with 27 home runs and 106 RBI in 1955; he was named to the National League (NL) All-Star roster for the first time and it was the first of a record 21 All-Star selections and first of a record 25 All-Star Game appearances; and

WHEREAS, On September 23, 1957, in Milwaukee, Hank Aaron hit a two-run walk-off home run against the St. Louis Cardinals, clinching the pennant for the Braves; in October, he hit .393 with three homers and seven RBI to win the World Series against the New York Yankees; and

WHEREAS, Hank Aaron's MLB career continued to flourish, and through the years, he continued to knock balls out of the park and his hitting average was always above 300; he was the recipient of numerous awards and accolades including two NL batting titles, The Sporting News NL Player of the Year, and a NL MVP Award, as well as three Gold Glove Awards; and

WHEREAS, After the 1965 season, the Braves moved to Atlanta and during the 1968 season, he was the first player to mark 500 home runs; two years later, he was the first Brave to record 3,000 career hits; and

WHEREAS, On July 13, 1971, Hank Aaron hit a home run in the All-Star Game, and hit his 40th home run of the season on August 10th, which established a NL record for most seasons with 40 or more home runs; at the age of 37, he hit a career-high 47 home runs and .669 slugging percentage during the season; and

WHEREAS, 1972 was another sensational year for Hank Aaron; he surpassed Willie Mays for second place on the career home run list in 1972, drove in the 2,000th run of his career, hit a home run in the first All-Star game, broke the record for total stolen bases (6,134), and hit his 673th home run; and

WHEREAS, At this point, Hank Aaron was closing in on Babe Ruth's home run record; in front of a huge home field crowd of 53,775 fans, he hit home run number 715 in the fourth inning to best the Great Bambino; and

WHEREAS, Hank Aaron hit his 733rd home run in his last at bat as a Braves player on October 2, 1974, and one month later, he was acquired by the Milwaukee Brewers; on May 1, 1975, he broke baseball's all-time RBI record, and that year, he played in his last and 24th All-Star Game; and

WHEREAS, On July 20, 1976, Hank Aaron hit his 755th and final home run at Milwaukee County Stadium, which stood as the MLB career home run record until it was broken in 2007; and

WHEREAS, Throughout his exemplary career, Hank Aaron recorded a batting average of .305 with 163 hits a season, while hitting an average of just over 32 home runs a year and 99 RBI; and

WHEREAS, After his retirement from the game, Hank Aaron worked as an executive with the Braves, and served as the corporate vice president of community relations for TBS, a member of the company's board of directors and the vice president of business development for The Airport Network; in 1982, he became the Braves' vice president and director of player development; and

WHEREAS, Always aware of the trials and tribulations he endured as a young player, Hank Aaron was instrumental in establishing programs which encouraged minorities to play baseball and founded the Hank Aaron Rookie League program; and

WHEREAS, On August 1, 1982, the Hammer was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, with 97.8 percent of the ballots; each year, thousands of people flock to Otsego County to honor his legacy and pay homage to this great sports icon; and

WHEREAS, Hank Aaron published his autobiography entitled **I Had a Hammer** in 1990, and became an entrepreneur, owning various car dealerships in Georgia and numerous restaurants throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, Predeceased by his son, Gary, Hank Aaron is survived by his loving wife, Billye; their two sons, Hank Jr. and Lary; three daughters, Gaie, Dorinda and Ceci, as well as numerous fans, friends and fellow athletes who will long cherish his memory; and

WHEREAS, A gifted athlete, Hank Aaron was a renowned legend in the sport of baseball; after more than two decades, his character and achievements stand as a sterling example and inspiration to all who would aspire to succeed; he will be deeply missed and truly merits the grateful tribute of this Legislative Body; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Hammerin' Hank Aaron, longstanding Home Run King for Major League Baseball, role model and humanitarian, and to express its deepest condolences to his family; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Henry Louis Aaron.

