Senate Resolution No. 364

BY: Senator STEWART-COUSINS

MEMORIALIZING Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim February 2019, as Black History Month in the State of New York

WHEREAS, Black History Month, previously known as Negro History Week, was founded by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, and was first celebrated on February 1, 1926; since 1976, it has become a nationally recognized month-long celebration, held each year during the month of February to acknowledge and pay tribute to African-Americans neglected by both society and the history books; and

WHEREAS, The month of February observes the rich and diverse heritage of our great State and Nation; and

WHEREAS, Black History Month seeks to emphasize Black History is American History; and

WHEREAS, Black History Month is a time to reflect on the struggles and victories of African-Americans throughout our country's history and to recognize their numerous valuable contributions to the protection of our democratic society in war and in peace; and

WHEREAS, Some African-American pioneers whose many accomplishments, all which took place during the month of February, went unnoticed as well as numerous symbolic events in February, that deserve to be memorialized include: John Sweat Rock, a noted Boston lawyer who became the first African-American admitted to argue before the U.S. Supreme Court on February 1, 1865, and the first African-American to be received on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives; Jonathan Jasper Wright, the first African-American to hold a major judicial position, who was elected to the South Carolina Supreme Court on February 1, 1870; President Abraham Lincoln submits the proposed 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, abolishing slavery, to the states for ratification on February 1, 1865; civil rights protester Jimmie Lee Jackson dies from wounds inflicted during a protest on February 26, 1965, leading to the historic Selma, Alabama civil rights demonstrations, including Bloody Sunday in which 600 demonstrators, including Martin Luther King, Jr. were attacked by police; Autherine J. Lucy became the first African-American student to attend the University of Alabama on February 3, 1956, she was expelled three days later "for her own safety" in response to threats from a mob; in 1992, Autherine Lucy Foster graduated from the University with a Master's degree in Education, the same day her daughter, Grazia Foster, graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Corporate Finance; the Negro Baseball League was founded on February 3, 1920; Jack Johnson, the first African-American World Heavyweight Boxing Champion, won his first title on February 3, 1903; and Reginald F. Lewis, born on December 7, 1942, in Baltimore, Maryland, received his law degree from Harvard Law School in 1968, and was a partner in Murphy, Thorpes & Lewis, the first Black law firm on Wall Street, and in 1989, he became President and CEO of TLC Beatrice International Food Company,

the largest Black-owned business in the United States; and

WHEREAS, In recognition of the vast contributions of African-Americans, a joyful month-long celebration is held across New York State and across the United States with many commemorative events to honor and display the cultural heritage of African-Americans; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body commends the African-American community for preserving, for future generations, its centuries-old traditions that benefit us all and add to the color and beauty of the tapestry which is our American society; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim February 2019, as Black History Month in the State of New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York, and to the events commemorating Black History Month throughout New York State.