Senate Resolution No. 643

BY: Senator THOMAS

RECOGNIZING the celebration of the Festival of Diwali on November 12, 2023

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body, in keeping with its time-honored traditions, to recognize and pay tribute to those who foster ethnic pride and enhance the profile of cultural diversity which strengthens the fabric of the communities of this great Empire State; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to recognize the celebration of the Festival of Diwali on Sunday, November 12, 2023; and

WHEREAS, The Festival of Diwali, commonly known as the Festival of Lights, is a major holiday which has both religious and historical significance for Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains; and

WHEREAS, The word Diwali is a shortened version of the Sanskrit term Deepavali and symbolizes the spiritual victory of light over darkness, of good over evil, and of knowledge over ignorance; and

WHEREAS, Celebrants of Diwali believe the "rows of lamps" symbolize the light within the individual that rids the soul of the darkness of ignorance; and

WHEREAS, The Festival of Diwali also celebrates the coming of monsoon season and the end of the summer harvest; each faith that celebrates this holiday connects it with different stories and religious significances; and

WHEREAS, Diwali, which falls on the last day of the month in the lunar calendar, is celebrated as both a day of thanksgiving and the beginning of the new year for many Hindus; and

WHEREAS, For Sikhs, Diwali is feted as the day the sixth founding Sikh Guru, or revered teacher, Guru Hargobind ji, was released from captivity from the ruling Mughal Emperor; and

WHEREAS, For Jains, Diwali marks the anniversary of the attainment of moksha or liberation by Mahavira, the last of the Tirthankaras, who were the great teachers of Jain dharma, at the end of his life in 527 B.C.; and

WHEREAS, The festival is celebrated over five days, with the third day being the most significant, as it coincides with the darkest night of the lunar month; and

WHEREAS, People begin the celebration on the first day of Diwali by cleaning, decorating and renovating their homes and workplaces; celebrators also wear their finest clothing, participate in family feasts, and illuminate lamps in their homes; and

WHEREAS, On the second day, celebrators pray for peace and perform rituals to liberate souls who suffer and to promote spiritual auspiciousness; and

WHEREAS, During the third day, the youngest members of families visit with elders, and celebrate the harvest with friends, family and colleagues; at dusk followers recite prayers and perform rituals to welcome prosperity and happiness in the coming year; and

WHEREAS, On the fourth day, families celebrate the bounties of marriage, with couples providing gifts to one another and parents inviting children and their spouses to celebrate; the final day celebrates the bond between siblings; and

WHEREAS, A longstanding holiday, Diwali is mentioned by Indian Kings in Sanskrit documents dating back to the 7th and 9th centuries; and

WHEREAS, It is the practice of this Legislative Body to recognize those who celebrate their rich ethnic flavor and who strive to preserve their cultural heritage; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to recognize the celebration of the Festival of Diwali; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the South Asian community of the State of New York.