

Senate Resolution No. 1701

BY: Senator STEWART-COUSINS

MEMORIALIZING Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim March 2026, as Women's History Month in the State of New York, honoring the extraordinary innovation, resilience, and contributions of women who have shaped New York and the Nation

WHEREAS, March is recognized as Women's History Month, a time when New York State honors the women whose leadership, creativity, and perseverance have transformed our communities and advanced equality across generations; and

WHEREAS, New York has long stood at the forefront of the women's rights movement, from the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 to the present day, serving as a national engine for progress in civil rights, education, economic opportunity, and democratic participation; and

WHEREAS, Women across every field, politics, science, medicine, law, business, education, the arts, journalism, and public service, have driven innovation and broken barriers despite systemic discrimination, ensuring that New York and this Nation remains a place where bold ideas and courageous leadership thrive; and

WHEREAS, New York's legacy of women innovators began early, including Emma Willard, who in 1821 founded the Troy Female Seminary, the first endowed institution for women's higher education in the United States, expanding academic opportunity for generations; and

WHEREAS, The fight for equality has always been strengthened by the leadership, bravery, and sacrifice of many women, including African American women like Sojourner Truth, whose powerful advocacy for abolition and women's rights challenged the nation's conscience, as well as Harriet Tubman, who led enslaved African American people to freedom and continued her humanitarian work in Auburn; and

WHEREAS, Pioneering advancements in education and medicine, Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman in the United States to earn a medical degree in 1849 from Geneva Medical College in New York, paving the way for women in medicine; Dr. Mary E. Walker was the first female U.S. Army surgeon and the only woman ever awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor; and

WHEREAS, Belva Lockwood became the first woman to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1880, advocating for women's rights in the legal profession; and

WHEREAS, Ida B. Wells, a journalist, civil rights activist, and former resident of Brooklyn, fought for social, economic, and racial equality for African Americans and all women while co-founding the NAACP; and

WHEREAS, Madam C.J. Walker, an African American entrepreneur and former Harlem resident, became the first woman in the United States to achieve self-made millionaire status through the success of her haircare business, and her Irvington estate, Villa Lewaro, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, stands as a lasting symbol of ingenuity, perseverance, and the American entrepreneurial spirit; and

WHEREAS, In 1917, New York guaranteed women the right to vote in all elections and in the following year the first two women, Ida Sammis and Mary Lilly, were elected to the New York State Legislature and became the first women to then serve in 1919; and

WHEREAS, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were two of many women leading the campaign for women's suffrage throughout the mid-to-late 19th century, advocating for the right to vote, which culminated in the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920; Maud Wood Park became the first national president of the League of Women Voters in 1920, helping to establish an organization that continues to empower voters and defend democracy; and

WHEREAS, Margaret Sanger, a pioneer in birth control education and advocacy, opened the first birth control clinic in the United States in Brooklyn in 1916, leading to the establishment of the Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau in New York City in 1923; and

WHEREAS, Rhoda Fox Graves, elected in 1934, became the first woman to serve in the New York State Senate and went on to serve in nine consecutive Legislatures from 1935 to 1948; in 1955, Bessie Buchanan became the first African American woman to serve in the New York State Legislature when she was elected to the New York State Assembly, breaking barriers in representation and public service; and

WHEREAS, Constance Baker Motley, a civil rights attorney and the first Black woman elected to the New York State Senate in 1964, was appointed to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York in January 1966; in 1968, Assemblywoman Shirley Chisholm became the first Black woman elected to Congress and, in 1972, became the first Black woman to seek a major party's nomination for President of the United States; and

WHEREAS, New York City was the site of the first Women's Strike for Equality in 1970, when 50,000 people marched for equal rights, marking a pivotal moment in the modern women's movement; and

WHEREAS, In 1978, Olga Mendez became the first Latina woman elected to the New York State Legislature, and in 1983, women legislators established the Legislative Women's Caucus to expand women's participation and leadership in government; and

WHEREAS, Women have continued to break ground in law and public service, from Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman to serve on the United States Supreme Court; to Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a Brooklyn native and the second woman to join the Court; to Sonia Sotomayor, the first Latina Justice; to Elena Kagan, the fourth woman appointed to the Court;

to Ketanji Brown Jackson, the first Black woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court; to Loretta Elizabeth Lynch, who built her distinguished legal career in New York and became the first African American woman to serve as Attorney General of the United States; to Janet Yellen, the first woman to serve as U.S. Secretary of the Treasury; and

WHEREAS, Women in New York and across the Nation have shaped culture, policy, law, arts, sciences, music, and athletics, including the New York Liberty, who won their first WNBA Championship in 2024; Team USA Women's Hockey captured gold at the 2026 Winter Olympic Games with a roster uniquely dominated by active college athletes, demonstrating the depth of young women's talent and the rising generation of leaders in women's sports; and

WHEREAS, 2026 marks the 106th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment, a reminder that the rights women fought for must be protected, expanded, and honored through continued civic participation and public leadership; and

WHEREAS, Today, in New York State, women hold 50% of statewide elected offices, including the Offices of Governor and Attorney General, as well as 34.7% of seats in the New York State Legislature, reflecting the growing leadership and influence of women in shaping public policy and strengthening democracy; and

WHEREAS, The extraordinary achievements of trailblazing women, spanning politics, law, medicine, business, civil rights, journalism, education, sports, and activism, have shaped the course of history and continue to inspire future generations; the collective achievements and efforts of these women have expanded rights, shattered barriers, and strengthened democracy, ensuring a more just and equitable society for all; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim March 2026, as Women's 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 Kathy Hochul, Governor of the State of New York; and to the Legislative Women's Caucus of New York State.