

BY: Senator WEBB

MEMORIALIZING Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim June 2026, as Black Music Month in the State of New York

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and pay tribute to those who seek to preserve and celebrate the musical heritage of our State and Nation; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim June 2026, as Black Music Month in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of National African American Music Appreciation Month; and

WHEREAS, African American Music Appreciation Month is an annual celebration of African American music in the United States, commemorated with special performances and multi-day festivals in musical genres ranging from soul to jazz to gospel to hip-hop throughout the Nation; and

WHEREAS, Observation of Black Music Month was initiated on June 7, 1979, by President Jimmy Carter, who decreed that June would be the month of Black music; since then, American presidents have continued the practice and, for each year of his term, former President Barack Obama announced the observance under a new title, African American Music Appreciation Month; and

WHEREAS, America's diverse musical heritage is a reflection of the creativity and optimism of our Nation; during Black Music Month, we celebrate the breathtaking talents and creativity of African-American vocalists, instrumentalists, and composers whose achievements have shaped our national culture and enriched our communities; and

WHEREAS, For the entire span of our Nation's history, African Americans have created music that communicates across racial and social boundaries, giving voice to the full range of human experience; and

WHEREAS, During African Americans' involuntary servitude, music often served as a means of expressing the inexpressible; when facing the cruelty of slavery and injustice, spirituals brought a sense of comfort; and

WHEREAS, These timeless declarations of hope and faith evolved into the more modern genres of gospel, blues, ragtime, and jazz, expressed in the musical genius of Scott Joplin, Marian Anderson, Eubie Blake, and Mahalia Jackson; during the Civil Rights era, African American musicians such as Duke Ellington, Muddy Waters, and Ruth Brown conveyed the struggles of their communities while bringing people of all backgrounds together; today, this music continues to inspire America's citizens and advance its creative spirit; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the course of American history, Black musicians have used their great talents to share the richness of the African American experience and to develop a uniquely American style of music enjoyed throughout the world; in June 2026, we honor the pioneers of African American music along with today's artists who continue their legacy; and

WHEREAS, From Ella Fitzgerald making history as the first Black woman to win a Grammy in 1958, to "Fight For You," the Academy Award winning best original song in the movie "Judas and The Black Messiah" in 2021, the historic success of Black artists continues to leave its mark in communities, and we are reminded every day that Black Lives Matter; and

WHEREAS, New York is the birthplace of many diverse artists and musical movements that have shaped and cultivated Black Music across all genres and generations; and

WHEREAS, A local component, the Harlem Renaissance, was the name given to the cultural, social, and artistic movement that took place in Harlem between the end of World War I and the middle of the 1930s; during this period, Harlem was a cultural center, drawing Black writers, artists, musicians, photographers, poets, and scholars; and

WHEREAS, The Bronx is home to hip-hop, a cultural movement which formed during the late 1960s among African American youth residing in the South Bronx in New York City; hip-hop legends who hail from the Bronx include KOOL DJ Herc, Grandmaster Melle Mel, and Kurtis Blow; and

WHEREAS, Queens, and in particular the neighborhoods of St. Albans, Addisleigh Park and Jamaica, were the traditional home to an entire spectrum of musical pioneers and legends, including Count Basie, Lena Horne, Ella Fitzgerald, Illinois Jacquet, James Brown, Milt Hinton, Cootie Williams, John Coltrane, Charlie Parker, Nasir Jones, and Russell Simmons, among so many others; and

WHEREAS, New Yorkers such as MC Lyte, Talib Kweli, DJ Beverly Bond, Bob Law, John Coltrane, Sheila L. Brown, and Andre Langston have made outstanding contributions to Black Music and culture, whose exemplary talents and legacies are integral in positively shaping the lives of our residents and beyond; and

WHEREAS, Events which provide a means of preserving a part of our rich American past and which contribute to the community in such noble endeavors as aforementioned, are held in the highest regard by this Legislative Body; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim June 2026, as Black Music Month in the State of New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor of the State of New

York.