Assembly Resolution No. 1109

BY: M. of A. Rajkumar

MEMORIALIZING Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim April 2026, as Punjabi Awareness Month in the State of New York

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and pay just tribute to the cultural heritage of the ethnic groups which comprise and contribute to the richness and diversity of the community of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in keeping with its time-honored traditions, it is the intent of this Legislative Body to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim April 2026, as Punjabi Awareness Month in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of Vaisakhi to be celebrated April 14, 2026; and

WHEREAS, Punjab is a diverse, vibrant state in northern India replete with culture and history, known around the world as the birthplace of Sikhism; and

WHEREAS, The first South Asians to immigrate to the United States were Punjabis, overwhelmingly Sikhs, who arrived in large numbers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to work as laborers in California and the Pacific Northwest; and

WHEREAS, The Punjabi American community continued to flourish, now numbering in the hundreds of thousands, including one of the largest Sikh populations in the world, and Punjabi Americans contribute to all facets of life; and

WHEREAS, Vaisakhi is one of the most important days of the year for Punjabis, falling on the first day of Vaisakha, the first month of the year in multiple South Asian calendars, which this year corresponds to April 14; and

WHEREAS, The holiday is sacred to Sikhs and some Hindus, having begun as a harvest festival in Punjab, and taking on profound spiritual importance when, in 1699, the date marked the foundation of the Order of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh Ji, a defining moment in Sikhism that established many of its customs and precepts; and

WHEREAS, The significance of Vaisakhi continued to evolve, becoming the date of the coronation of Ranjit Singh as first Maharaja of the Sikh Empire in 1801; and

WHEREAS, Celebration of Vaisakhi takes various local forms in South Asia and around the world, with Sikh celebrations including social gatherings, nagar kirtan processions with the singing of hymns, raising of the Nishan Sahib flag, distribution of free food, and visits to Gurdwaras, their houses of worship; and

WHEREAS, Many Hindus observe Vaisakhi with activities such as ritual bathing in sacred rivers, festivals, charitable acts, and processions; and

WHEREAS, New York City is home to festive annual celebrations to observe Vaisakhi, including the Sikh Day Parade in Manhattan, the Turban Day mass tying in Times Square, the Vaisakhi 5k Run in South Queens, and celebrations at Gurdwara Sikh Cultural Society, Inc. Sangat and Baba Makhan Shah Lubana Sikh Center in Richmond Hill; and

WHEREAS, Richmond Hill is an epicenter of Sikhism in the Western Hemisphere, home to one of the largest Sikh communities outside of India, and often referred to as Little Punjab; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is pleased to have this opportunity to recognize such events of significance which foster ethnic pride and exemplify the cultural diversity that represents and strengthens the fabric of the people and the State of New York; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim April 2026, as Punjabi Awareness 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; the Consul General of India; and various Indian and Sikh organizations in the State of New York.