Assembly Resolution No. 578

BY: M. of A. Bronson

COMMEMORATING the 200th Birthday of Antoinette Brown Blackwell, the first woman ordained as a minister in the United States and a pioneer in the struggle for women's rights and social reform

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize and honor individuals whose lives exemplify the highest ideals of courage, intellect, and progress, and whose enduring contributions have shaped our shared history and civil society; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 200th Birthday of Antoinette Brown Blackwell, to be celebrated with a Luncheon in her honor on Saturday, May 24, 2025, at Wild Wood Country Club in Rush, New York; and

WHEREAS, A trailblazing figure in American religious and social history, Antoinette Brown Blackwell became the first woman to be ordained as a minister in a recognized denomination in the United States, overcoming formidable institutional and societal barriers to affirm the public role of women in both spiritual and civic life; and

WHEREAS, Born on May 20, 1825, in Henrietta, New York, Antoinette Brown Blackwell demonstrated an unwavering intellectual and moral resolve from an early age, joining the Congregational Church at nine years old and later pursuing theological studies at Oberlin College, where she defied convention by seeking ordination despite opposition from both faculty and family; and

WHEREAS, Though Oberlin denied her a preacher's license upon completion of her coursework in 1850, Antoinette Brown Blackwell persisted in her calling, and on September 15, 1853, was ordained as minister of the First Congregational Church in Butler and Savannah, Wayne County, New York-thereby achieving a historic first in the American pulpit; and

WHEREAS, A gifted orator and prolific writer, Antoinette Brown Blackwell published eight books and numerous essays exploring religion, philosophy, and science, advancing a theoretical and moral foundation for gender equality while engaging with prominent contemporaries including Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton; and

WHEREAS, She participated in the first National Women's Rights Convention in 1850, spoke out at the World's Temperance Convention in 1853, and became a lifelong advocate for women's suffrage and social justice, continuing to write, speak, and organize while raising a family of five daughters with her husband, Samuel Blackwell; and

WHEREAS, Antoinette Brown Blackwell's influence extended well beyond her time, as she remained an active voice for reform well into her 90s,

addressing the Senate Committee on Woman Suffrage and urging President Theodore Roosevelt to support the suffrage amendment; and

WHEREAS, In 1920, at the age of 95, she cast her ballot in a national election, bearing witness to the passage of the 19th Amendment as the last surviving member of the original women's rights leadership; and

WHEREAS, Antoinette Brown Blackwell died in 1921 in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and was posthumously inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 1993; and

WHEREAS, The fieldstone house in Henrietta, New York, where she was raised still stands today as a tangible testament to her life, values, and contributions; and

WHEREAS, Antoinette Brown Blackwell's legacy continues to inspire generations of women and men committed to equality, justice, and the power of moral conviction; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 200th Birthday of Antoinette Brown Blackwell, and to recognize her enduring place in the archives of American and New York State history; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Henrietta Historical Society and other relevant historical and civic institutions honoring her legacy.