

BY: M. of A. Woerner

COMMEMORATING the unveiling of the Solomon Northup sculpture "Hope Out of Darkness" as a historic milestone

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body recognizes the importance of telling our State's full and inclusive history and is committed to honoring the experiences, struggles, and triumphs of all New Yorkers, especially those whose voices have historically been silenced; and

WHEREAS, Solomon Northup, a free Black man born in Minerva, New York, in 1807, was living and working in Saratoga Springs when he was kidnapped, sold into slavery, and held in brutal captivity for 12 years in Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, Solomon Northup's harrowing journey-documented in his landmark memoir *Twelve Years a Slave*-became one of the most powerful first-person accounts of American slavery and continues to educate, move, and challenge readers nearly two centuries later; and

WHEREAS, Solomon Northup's story has left an indelible mark on our nation's conscience, brought vividly to life through the television film "Solomon Northup's Odyssey" (1984), the United States Department of State's documentary "Journey to Freedom" (2012), and the Oscar-winning film "12 Years A Slave" (2013); and

WHEREAS, The legacy of Solomon Northup has been further honored in powerful exhibitions such as "The Transformative Power of the Narrative, Solomon Northup" (2014) in the Hall of Governors at the New York State Capitol, and "The People of New York" (2019), both of which spotlight the contributions of African Americans to our shared story; and

WHEREAS, The Saratoga Spa State Park has become the honored host of the first-ever bronze sculpture of Solomon Northup; and

WHEREAS, The powerful bronze sculpture-titled "Hope Out of Darkness"- was created by acclaimed artist Wesley Wofford, FNSS, and was commissioned by the Solomon Northup Committee for Commemorative Works of Louisiana, whose unwavering dedication helped bring this vision to life; and

WHEREAS, After its time in New York, "Hope Out of Darkness" will continue its journey to its permanent home in Marksville, Louisiana, where Solomon Northup endured years of enslavement before reclaiming his freedom; this significant location ensures that his legacy continues to resonate in the very place where justice was most denied; and

WHEREAS, This sculpture's unveiling will occur on Thursday, July 10, 2025, on what would have been Solomon Northup's 218th birthday, linking the past and present with a powerful call to truth, healing, and historical reckoning; and

WHEREAS, The "Hope Out of Darkness" sculpture will stand as a memorial to inspire all citizens and visitors of New York to honor lives like Solomon Northup's with dignity and inspire learning, remembrance, and unity as we strive to build a future informed by the full breadth of our past; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to proudly commemorate the unveiling of the Solomon Northup sculpture "Hope Out of Darkness" as a historic milestone.