Assembly Resolution No. 959

BY: M. of A. McMahon

MEMORIALIZING Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim February 21, 2026, as Mother Language Day in the State of New York

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize that the quality and character of life in the communities across New York State are reflective of the concerned and dedicated efforts of those organizations and individuals that are devoted to the welfare of the community and its citizenry; and

WHEREAS, It is also the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize official days that are set aside to increase awareness of issues that affect the lives of citizens of New York State; and

WHEREAS, International Mother Language Day is an observance held annually on February 21st worldwide to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism; and

WHEREAS, The date represents the day in 1952, when students from different institutions such as Dhaka University, Jagannath University and Dhaka Medical College demonstrating for recognition of their language, Bangla, were shot and killed by police in Dhaka, the capital of present-day Bangladesh; and

WHEREAS, First announced on November 17, 1999, by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Mother Language Day is based on the premise that linguistic and cultural diversity represent universal values that strengthen the union and cohesion of societies; it has been observed every year since its inaugural celebration in February of 2000; and

WHEREAS, UNESCO sets the theme for each International Mother Language Day, and holds related events at its headquarters in Paris on or around February 21 each year; and

WHEREAS, Presented annually on International Mother Language Day, the Linguapax Prize recognizes and awards outstanding contributions in the preservation of linguistic diversity, revitalization and reactivation of linguistic communities, and the promotion of multilingualism; and

WHEREAS, On May 16, 2009, the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution, called upon Member States to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by people of the world; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, by the same resolution, the General Assembly proclaimed 2008 as the International Year of Languages, to promote unity in diversity and international understanding, through multilingualism and multiculturalism; and

WHEREAS, Linguistic diversity is increasingly threatened as more and more languages disappear; globally, 40 percent of the population does not have access to an education in a language they speak or understand; and

WHEREAS, At least 43 percent of the estimated 6,000 languages spoken in the world are endangered; only a few hundred languages have genuinely been given a place in education systems and the public domain, and less than a hundred are used in the digital world; and

WHEREAS, Nevertheless, progress is being made in mother tongue-based multilingual education with growing understanding of its importance, particularly in early schooling, and more commitment to its development in public life; and

WHEREAS, Languages are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage; all moves to promote the dissemination of mother tongues will serve not only to a encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education, but also to develop fuller awareness of linguistic cultural traditions throughout the world to inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim February 21, 2026, as Mother Language Day in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of International Mother Language Day; 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.