

STATE OF NEW YORK

5116

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

February 19, 2025

Introduced by Sen. CLEARE -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Higher Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to the documentation and preservation of Black history in New York state by the state university of New York

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The education law is amended by adding a new section 351-a
2 to read as follows:

3 § 351-a. The documentation and preservation of Black history in New
4 York state by the state university of New York. 1. Legislative intent.
5 The state of New York recognizes how Black New Yorkers and particularly
6 communities like Harlem have shaped the state's cultural, social, and
7 historical identity. Black communities have been a part of New York's
8 development from enslavement to Reconstruction, through the inequities
9 of Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, and the continuous struggle for
10 equity today. The state acknowledges that gentrification and the under-
11 representation of Black history have caused the Black community to be
12 uprooted and to lose its history. Fortunately, we currently have the
13 privilege of hearing first-hand stories from people who were present at
14 important moments in the Black liberation movement. Their personal
15 accounts are priceless evidence of determination, advocacy, and
16 progress. If we do not take immediate action to protect these voices we
17 run the risk of losing an important piece of our history. This section
18 aims to build a record of the impact of these communities on the forma-
19 tion of the state and to provide methods for the teaching, recording,
20 and preservation of Black history.

21 2. Black history preservation commission. (a) In order to collect,
22 preserve, and document Black history in New York state, the Black histo-
23 ry preservation commission is hereby created. Initially, the commission
24 shall partner with the state university of New York at Albany, the state

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 university of New York at Buffalo, and the state university of New York
2 at Stony Brook to assess the project's effectiveness before expanding to
3 additional campuses.

4 (b) The commission shall consist of the following nine members: (i)
5 one member appointed by the temporary president of the senate; (ii) one
6 member appointed by the speaker of the assembly; (iii) one member
7 appointed by the minority leader of the senate; (iv) one member
8 appointed by the minority leader of the assembly; (v) two members
9 appointed by the chancellor of the state university of New York; (vi)
10 two members appointed by the governor; and (vii) the chancellor of the
11 state university of New York.

12 (c) The chancellor of the state university of New York shall serve as
13 chair of the commission to provide institutional support and ensure the
14 project aligns with the goals of the state university of New York
15 system.

16 (d) The commission shall advance the understanding and awareness of
17 Black history, particularly the history and contributions of Black
18 communities in New York state through educational programs and
19 resources.

20 (e) The commission shall be in charge of documenting, preserving, and
21 circulating historical materials about Black history in New York.

22 (f) The commission shall guarantee that Black New Yorkers' perspec-
23 tives and contributions are heard by collaborating with cultural insti-
24 tutions and historical groups.

25 (g) The commission shall advocate for legislative support to fund,
26 promote, and sustain initiatives related to the preservation and educa-
27 tion of Black history within New York.

28 (h) The state university of New York shall assist the commission in
29 achieving these objectives through joint research initiatives, public
30 awareness campaigns, and the creation of educational materials to ensure
31 greater awareness and understanding of Black history creating a more
32 inclusive and accurate representation of New York's diverse history.

33 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.