Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, TN

Legislation Text

File #: RS2025-1035, **Version:** 1

A resolution recognizing February 2025 as Black History Month in Nashville and Davidson County.

WHEREAS, Black History Month is celebrated each February and recognizes the legacy of Black Americans whose power to lead, to overcome, and to expand the meaning and practice of American democracy has helped our Nation become a more fair and just society; and

WHEREAS, the United States was established upon the profound but simple idea that all people are created equal and should be treated equally throughout their lives. However, this is not an idea that America has always lived up to; and

WHEREAS, in 1925, an African-American scholar, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, launched an effort to focus awareness on the contributions of African Americans to American society that, in 1976, became Black History Month, a month-long celebration in February of the countless contributions of African Americans to this country; and

WHEREAS, this month, we celebrate and recognize Black leaders, inventors, artists, musicians, educators, entrepreneurs, professionals, workers, organizers, activists, and creators on a national level including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Barack Obama, George Washington Carver, Fannie Lou Hamer, Harriet Tubman, Shirley Chisholm, Jackie Robinson, Billie Holiday, and many more; and

WHEREAS, we also celebrate those locally who have contributed to the rich history of our community in Nashville and Davidson County; and

WHEREAS, Nashville is home to four Historically Black Colleges and Universities (“HBCUs”) -- American Baptist College, Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, and Tennessee State University. Nashville was also home to a fifth HBCU, the former Central Tennessee College later known as Walden University; and

WHEREAS, in 1873, a performance of the Fisk Jubilee Singers in Great Britain led Queen Victoria to proclaim Nashville as “Music City”, which became Nashville’s unofficial moniker; and

WHEREAS, in 1905, the prestigious McKissack & McKissack architecture firm was founded in Nashville by brothers Moses and Calvin McKissack. The firm designed iconic buildings in Nashville including the Carnegie Library at Fisk University, the Morris Memorial Building, Pearl High School, and later built buildings across the country including the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis. The firm is the oldest minority-owned architecture firm in the United States; and

WHEREAS, in 1951, Z. Alexander Looby and Robert E. Lillard were the first Black members of the Nashville City Council since 1911, when Solomon P. Harris was elected to the Nashville City Council. After being sworn into office, Looby and Lillard focused on legislation and policies to do away with Jim Crow laws and introduced bills to desegregate public spaces; and

WHEREAS, Nashville was a center for the Civil Rights Movement. Individuals including Rev. James Lawson, John Lewis, Diane Nash, C.T. Vivian, Bernard Lafayette, James Bevel, William Harbour, and James Zwerg, among many others participated in sit-ins and rode busses around the southern United States as Freedom Riders; and

WHEREAS, from the 1940s to the 1960s, Jefferson Street was one of America’s best-known districts of jazz,

blues, and rhythm and blues. It attracted Black musicians like Duke Ellington, Little Richard, Ray Charles, Fats Domino, and even Jimi Hendrix to play clubs including Del Morocco, Club Baron, and Club Steal-Away; and

WHEREAS, Nashville is also home to the National Museum of African American Music, which officially opened in January 2021, and is the only museum of its kind dedicated to preserving and celebrating the history of Black music in America; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper for the Metropolitan Council to recognize the important role and enormous contributions of the Black community to Nashville and Davidson County on the occasion of Black History Month.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. The Metropolitan County Council hereby goes on record as recognizing February 2025 as Black History Month in Nashville and Davidson.

Section 2. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.