**A** **SENATE RESOLUTION**

TO HONOR THE MARTIN FAMILY FOR ITS RICH HISTORY IN SOUTH CAROLINA AND TO RECOGNIZE ITS SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO BEAUFORT COUNTY AND THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

Whereas, the story of the Martin family began centuries ago in Sub‑Saharan Africa. Abducted from their homeland, the Martins survived the horrors of the Middle Passage to become part of the Gullah‑Geechee communities located between Charleston and Savannah, where they endured the toils of plantation slave labor, witnessed personal loss during the Civil War, and saw the violent destruction of black political progress by the Ku Klux Klan and Jim Crow laws. Yet through faith and hard work, the Martins prevailed; and

Whereas, Caroline Hatty Martin, born circa 1820, is the first known matriarch of the Martin family. It is believed that she was the child of Edmond W. Martin, a planter in the Bluffton area, and that she was raised in the same house as his wife and other children. By at least 1858, she was a free woman, although it is not known whether she was born free, granted freedom later in life, or purchased her own freedom. In 1858, in a rare act for a woman of color, Caroline bought a tract of land on Calhoun Street, most of which still remains in the family. In that same year, she also married Isaac, or Isaiah, “Big John” Henry, who was held in bondage until she purchased him. Together, they lived on the Calhoun Street property with their children: Philip, Mary, Isaiah, John Henry, and Eliza. Isaac worked as a mason and plaster worker and Caroline as a mantua maker. In 1863, their house was destroyed by Union soldiers who burned the town of Bluffton. In 1868, Isaac became the first Martin and one of the first black men in the country to register to vote; and

Whereas, in 1892, Caroline and Isaac’s youngest son, John Henry, married Mary Jane Johnson. They had six children: Hatie, John Henry, Jr. or “Bubba,” Margaret, Freddie, Phillip, and Benjamin. Mary Jane died in 1973 at the age of 108; and

Whereas, Bubba, one of John Henry and Mary Jane’s sons, worked in Savannah, Charleston, and Baltimore for restaurants, a commercial ferry operation, and charter boat fishing parties. In 1920, he married Rena Aletha Johnson, and they lived together in Bluffton, where they raised hogs, cows, and chickens. Rena was a domestic worker and shucked oysters for a seafood operation. Bubba eventually joined the U.S. Merchant Marine Service as a steward and cook, sailing to ports in Europe, Africa, Asia, and South America, and he was known by many for his seafaring stories. By 1940, Bubba and Rena had eleven children: John, Philip, Mary Madeline, Margaret, Pearl, James, Jacob, Irabelle, Daniel, Mildred, and Vivian. Three of their sons, John, Jr., Philip, and James, served in World War II. Rena died in 1967 and Bubba in 2001. Rena’s portrait still hangs in the family’s home church, Campbell Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church; and

Whereas, the Martin family is now more than 200 persons strong, and they continue to contribute to their local communities and their beloved country. They have become soldiers and sailors, educators, principals, professional boxers, scientists, engineers, construction workers, law enforcement officers, preachers of the gospel, health care professionals, lawyers, legislators, judges, nonprofit founders, recording artists, world champion professional boxers, authors, poets, dancers, artists, actors, and even members of the U.S. Secret Service. Families like the Martins were instrumental in founding American civilization and are central to its continued growth. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate:

That the members of the South Carolina Senate, by this resolution, honor the Martin family for its rich history in South Carolina.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to the Martin family.

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