**A** **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE THE LIFE ACHIEVEMENTS OF DOCTOR MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., TO HONOR THE LEGACY OF HIS COMMITMENT TO LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL CITIZENS, AND TO PLEDGE TO SUPPORT LEGISLATION THAT WILL CHAMPION THE FULLNESS OF HIS LEGACY.

Whereas, Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., dedicated his life to securing the nation’s fundamental principles of liberty and justice for all citizens; and

Whereas, Dr. King was the leading civil rights advocate of his time, spearheading the civil rights movement in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s and earned worldwide recognition as an eloquent and articulate spokesperson for equality; and

Whereas, Dr. King was born on January 15, 1929, and attended segregated public schools in Georgia; and

Whereas, Dr. King began attending Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, at the age of fifteen, and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1948 from Morehouse College, following in the footsteps of both his father and grandfather; and

Whereas, Dr. King received his Bachelor of Divinity in 1951 from Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania and his Ph.D. in theology in 1955 from Boston University; and

Whereas, in Boston, Dr. King met Coretta Scott, his life partner and fellow civil rights activist, and they married on June 18, 1953, and had two sons and two daughters; and

Whereas, Dr. King was ordained in the Christian ministry in February 1948 at the age of nineteen at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, and became Assistant Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church; and

Whereas, in 1954, Dr. King accepted the call of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, and was pastor there until November 1959, when he resigned to move back to Atlanta to lead the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); and

Whereas, from 1960 until his death in 1968, Dr. King was again a pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church, along with his father; and

Whereas, between 1957 and 1968, Dr. King traveled over six million miles, spoke over two thousand five hundred times, and wrote five books and numerous articles, supporting efforts around the nation to end injustice and bring about social change and desegregation; and

Whereas, in order to observe, reflect, and celebrate the fullness of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, legacy, we must take up and reckon with Dr. King’s rejection of the economic status quo and shift toward economic justice in the later years of his life; and

Whereas, Dr. King believed that without economic justice it would be impossible to achieve the full citizenship that was promised to all marginalized people in the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act; and

Whereas, Dr. King, Marion Wright, and the SCLC launched the Poor People’s Campaign as the beginning of a new cooperation, understanding, and a determination by poor people of all colors and backgrounds to assert and win their right to a decent life and respect for their culture and dignity; and

Whereas, Dr. King organized two thousand poor people to go to Washington D.C., southern states and northern cities to meet with governmental officials to demand jobs, unemployment insurance, a fair minimum wage, and education for poor adults and children; and

Whereas, on May 12, 1968, roughly one month after the assassination of Dr. King, Mrs. Coretta Scott King led thousands of women to launch the Poor People’s Campaign. On May 13, 1968, Resurrection City was erected on the National Mall in Washington D.C. Over the course of the next month, demonstrators outlasted the staggering heat and demanded economic opportunity at different federal agencies; and

Whereas, as a result of the 1968 leg of the Poor People’s Campaign, two hundred counties received free surplus food distribution and some federal agencies agreed to hire poor people to lead poverty programs; and

Whereas, the Poor People’s Campaign continues today advocating for their declaration of rights and the Poor People’s Moral Agenda which tackles systemic racism, poverty and inequality, ecological devastation, national morality, and war economy and militarism; and

Whereas, according to the Institute for Economic and Racial Equity at The Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University, “policy drives the racial wealth gap”. This means that “policy changes rather than behavioral changes” are the key in closing the wealth gap across racial groups. As legislators who craft state policy, general assemblies must ensure that the policies they create do not exacerbate and work to shrink the existing disparities; and

Whereas, the COVID‑19 pandemic amplified and worsened the existing wealth inequalities across racial groups; and

Whereas Dr. King’s economic justice work remains unfinished today. State legislatures must commit to and reaffirm their commitment to manifesting and actualizing the fullness of Dr. King’s dream; and

Whereas, in 2020, the United States poverty rate was 11.4% which increased from 2019. There are approximately 37.2 million people in poverty. There was an increase of 3.3 million people in poverty from 2019 to 2020; and

Whereas, the poverty rate for children under eighteen was 16.1% in 2020; and

Whereas, 19.5% of Black people in the United States are in poverty. Black Americans had the highest rate of poverty across the racial groups examined for this United States Census report; and

Whereas, states with the highest poverty rates are: Mississippi with 20.3% of the population below the poverty line; Louisiana with 19.2% of the population below the poverty line; New Mexico with 19.1% of the population below the poverty line; West Virginia with 17.6% of the population below the poverty line; Kentucky with 17.3% of the population below the poverty line; Arkansas with 17.0% of the population below the poverty line; Alabama with 16.7% of the population below the poverty line; Oklahoma with 15.7% of the population below the poverty line; Tennessee with 15.2% of the population below the poverty line; and South Carolina also with 15.2% of the population below the poverty line; and

Whereas, the real median household income for Black people is the lowest across all racial groups ($45,870) and is $10,000 less than the next group; and

Whereas, based on the United States Census, the real median household income for Black Americans is approximately $22,000 less than the average real median household income for all races; and

Whereas, the median net worth for Black households is $20,730 while the net worth of non‑Hispanic White households is $181,440. Black households have the lowest wealth attainment across the groups observed in the data; and

Whereas, as of January 2022, Black unemployment is up to 7% while national unemployment is down to 3.9%. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives, the Senate concurring:

That the members of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina recognize the life achievements of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., honor the legacy of his commitment to liberty and justice for all citizens, and pledge to support legislation that will champion the fullness of his legacy.

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