



HR0726

LRB104 21123 ECR 35391 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, Farming as a family-owned and independent business has been an important part of the social and economic development of Illinois and the United States; and

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WHEREAS, Black farmers in America have had a long struggle to own land and operate independently; for more than a century after emancipation and the ratification of the 13th Amendment that abolished slavery, various economic and social barriers were discriminatorily applied toward Black farmers, and the few existing civil rights laws were rarely enforced; and

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WHEREAS, Many foundational agricultural techniques used in the United States today were developed or refined through the knowledge and labor of enslaved Africans, who brought with them sophisticated farming traditions from West and Central Africa, including expertise in rice cultivation, crop rotation, seed selection, irrigation, and soil stewardship that helped shape American agricultural systems; and

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WHEREAS, Pembroke Township in Kankakee County, founded by self-emancipated formerly enslaved people, developed into one of the largest historic Black rural farming communities in the Northern United States, where generations of Black farmers pursued land ownership and agricultural independence and

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1 established a lasting legacy of agricultural stewardship in
2 Illinois; and

3 WHEREAS, In 1920, there were approximately 892 Black
4 farmers in Illinois, and African Americans owned approximately
5 14% of the nation's farmland; and

6 WHEREAS, Despite Illinois having nearly 27 million acres
7 of farmland, Black farmers today operate less than 1% of that
8 land, reflecting the long-term decline in Black land ownership
9 and participation in agriculture over the past century; and

10 WHEREAS, Over the last century, Black land ownership has
11 declined dramatically nationwide, with Black farmers losing an
12 estimated 90% of their farmland since its peak in the early
13 20th century; and

14 WHEREAS, According to the United States Department of
15 Agriculture's 2017 Census of Agriculture, Illinois had 188
16 individually Black-owned farms, covering approximately 40,412
17 acres, and out of 116,417 agricultural producers statewide,
18 only 267 were Black; and

19 WHEREAS, According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture,
20 Black producers in Illinois represented well under 1% of all
21 agricultural producers in the State, and Black-operated

1 farmland accounted for less than 1% of the State's nearly 27
2 million agricultural acres; and

3 WHEREAS, As farming has become a large-scale,
4 capital-intensive industry, it has become one of the least
5 diverse business sectors in the State, and pressures of
6 consolidation, rising land values, limited access to credit,
7 heirs' property challenges, and inequitable program access
8 have disproportionately reduced the ranks of Black family and
9 independent farmers; and

10 WHEREAS, In a landmark legal settlement, the United States
11 Department of Agriculture acknowledged decades of
12 discriminatory lending practices toward Black farmers,
13 including delayed loans, denied financing, and inequitable
14 access to federal programs; and

15 WHEREAS, Illinois has created regulatory frameworks for
16 both industrial hemp and adult-use cannabis cultivation, and
17 the State has expressed a commitment to social equity and the
18 inclusion of communities historically harmed by prohibition;
19 and

20 WHEREAS, Expanding equitable access to land, capital, and
21 agricultural markets, including emerging specialty crop
22 sectors creates new opportunities for Black farmers and

1 growers to build generational wealth and participate more
2 fully in Illinois' evolving agricultural economy; and

3 WHEREAS, Illinois has increasingly recognized the
4 importance of expanding opportunities for emerging farmers and
5 socially disadvantaged producers, including those
6 participating in specialty crop sectors such as industrial
7 hemp and cannabis cultivation, as part of a broader effort to
8 build a more equitable and resilient agricultural economy; and

9 WHEREAS, Black farmers and growers in Illinois today are
10 leading innovation in urban agriculture, specialty crop
11 production, regenerative farming practices, hemp and cannabis
12 cultivation, vertical production systems, and local food
13 distribution networks; in Chicago alone, more than 800
14 community gardens and urban farms operate across the city,
15 with many being stewarded by Black growers and community
16 organizations working to strengthen local food systems and
17 improve food access in underserved communities; therefore, be
18 it

19 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
20 HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
21 we declare May 3 through May 9, 2026 as Black Farmers and
22 Growers Week in the State of Illinois; and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That we encourage the people of Illinois and
2 their representatives in government to learn about the history
3 of Black farming communities and the contributions made by
4 African Americans to agriculture in the United States; and be
5 it further

6 RESOLVED, That we further encourage State agencies and
7 policymakers to ensure that agricultural programs intended to
8 support farmers are implemented in a manner that meaningfully
9 reaches Black farmers and growers across Illinois, including
10 emerging, limited-resource, and socially disadvantaged
11 producers, and that outreach and program participation extend
12 broadly throughout the State's Black farming communities; and
13 be it further

14 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
15 presented to the Governor of the State of Illinois, the
16 Lieutenant Governor of the State of Illinois, the Director of
17 the Illinois Department of Agriculture, the National Black
18 Farmers Association, and the National Black Food & Justice
19 Alliance.