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1 HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, Pent-up frustrations, including bad policing
3 practices, a flawed justice system, unscrupulous consumer
4 credit practices, poor or inadequate housing, high
5 unemployment, voter suppression, and other culturally embedded
6 forms of racial discrimination boiled over in many poor
7 African American neighborhoods during the mid- to late-1960s,
8 setting off riots that rampaged out of control from block to
9 block; the burning, battering and ransacking of property and
10 raging crowds created chaos in which some neighborhood
11 residents and law enforcement operatives endured shockingly
12 random injuries or deaths; and

13 WHEREAS, Many Americans blamed the riots on outside
14 agitators or young Black men, who represented the largest and
15 most visible group of rioters; however, the Kerner Commission
16 turned those assumptions upside-down in March of 1968,
17 declaring it was white racism, not Black anger, that turned
18 the key that unlocked urban American turmoil; and

19 WHEREAS, As a result, The National Advisory Commission on
20 Civil Disorders, known as the Kerner Commission after its
21 chair, then-Governor Otto Kerner Jr. of Illinois, was formed;
22 it was an 11-member Presidential Commission established by
23 President Lyndon B. Johnson in Executive Order 11365 to

1 investigate the causes of the 1967 race riots in the United
2 States and to provide recommendations for the future; and

3 WHEREAS, The Kerner Commission found that poverty and
4 institutional racism were driving inner city violence and
5 proposed aggressive government spending to provide equal
6 opportunities to African Americans; the report was rushed into
7 print by Bantam Books, and the 708-page report became a
8 best-seller, selling 740,000 copies in a few weeks; and

9 WHEREAS, To mark the 30th anniversary of the Kerner
10 Report, the Eisenhower Foundation in 1998 sponsored two
11 complementary reports, The Millennium Breach and Locked in the
12 Poorhouse; The Millennium Breach, coauthored by former senator
13 and commission member Fred R. Harris, found the racial divide
14 had grown in the subsequent years with inner city unemployment
15 at crisis levels; The Millennium Breach found that for most of
16 the decade that followed the Kerner Report, the U.S. made
17 progress on the principal fronts detailed in the report, which
18 were race, poverty, and inner cities; then progress stopped
19 and in some ways reversed, due to a series of economic shocks
20 and trends and the government's own action and inaction; and

21 WHEREAS, African American poverty remains a critical issue
22 today; in 1969, about one-third of Blacks lived below the
23 poverty line; by 2016, that number had dropped to 22 percent as

1 a significant number of African Americans moved into the
2 middle class with a boost from 1960s legislation; however, the
3 percentage of Blacks living in poverty is still more than
4 twice as high as the percentage of whites; a lack of
5 opportunity has been shown to increase drug abuse,
6 unemployment, poverty, violence, and other negative factors
7 within a community; and

8 WHEREAS, Blacks now have a louder voice in government, yet
9 poverty and disenfranchisement remain; notwithstanding the
10 Kerner Commission's optimism about potential change, there
11 have been only scattered efforts over the last 50 years to end
12 the United States' racial divide or to address the racial
13 component of poverty in the U.S.; and

14 WHEREAS, Now more than ever, it is obvious that we need to
15 rebuild these economies in urban areas which have been
16 fostered by racial discrimination; to accomplish this, we can
17 replicate a successful rebuilding plan from our country's
18 history; and

19 WHEREAS, In the wake of World War II, Secretary of State
20 George C. Marshall proposed a comprehensive plan to rebuild
21 the economies and spirits of Western Europe in 1947; as part of
22 this plan, the U.S. gave \$13 billion in aid to 16 European
23 nations; this aid included shipping food, staples, fuel, and

1 machinery, rebuilding war-devastated regions, removing trade
2 barriers, and investing in an industrial capacity; and

3 WHEREAS, Due to what became known as the Marshall Plan,
4 European economies experienced unprecedented growth from 1948
5 to 1952, postwar poverty and starvation disappeared, and
6 standards of living increased remarkably; and

7 WHEREAS, Former National Urban League President John
8 Jacobs often spoke of the need for a new domestic Marshall
9 Plan, championing the idea that we could rebuild urban areas
10 in the U.S. the same way we rebuilt entire nations abroad; and

11 WHEREAS, African Americans in the City of Chicago are
12 disproportionately affected by both the violence and the
13 poverty in the city, particularly on the West and South sides;
14 African Americans make up approximately a third of the city's
15 population; despite this, they have consistently accounted for
16 more than 70 percent of homicide victims for decades; due to
17 pre-existing inequalities such as segregation, financial
18 disparities, lack of access to a good education, lost wages,
19 lost homes, lost inheritances, lack of access to testing and
20 treatment, and other issues, the current COVID-19 pandemic has
21 disproportionately hurt African Americans, especially in
22 Chicago; and

1 WHEREAS, Across the nation and in our State, a
2 comprehensive and targeted economic recovery plan is necessary
3 to revitalize and to help elevate the African American
4 population; this new plan must provide federal, state, local
5 tax credits, and other enhancements to encourage businesses to
6 relocate to these struggling communities in order to foster
7 economic vitality; therefore, be it

8 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
9 HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE
10 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that we urge the Illinois General
11 Assembly and the United States Congress to explore a new,
12 domestic investment plan to promote economic growth and
13 recovery in targeted African American communities; and be it
14 further

15 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be sent
16 to the Mayor of Chicago, the President of the Cook County
17 Board, all members of the Chicago City Council, the Governor
18 of Illinois, all members of the Illinois General Assembly, the
19 President of the United States, the U.S. Senate Majority
20 Leader, the U.S. Senate Minority Leader, the U.S. Speaker of
21 the House, the U.S. House of Representatives Minority Leader,
22 and all members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation.