



SR0220

LRB103 32066 MST 61002 r

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SENATE 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 towards Black farmers, and the few existing civil rights laws were rarely enforced; and

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WHEREAS, Pembroke Township, founded by self-emancipated, escaped enslaved people, was once home to the largest community of Black farmers in the north; and

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WHEREAS, In 1920, Illinois had 892 Black farmers, and African Americans owned 14 percent of the nation's farmland; and

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WHEREAS, According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Statistics Service, as of April 2019, Illinois had 72,000 farms, covering 27 million acres, which is approximately 75% of the State's total land area; and

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1 WHEREAS, As of the 2017 USDA Agricultural Census, there
2 were 188 individually Black-owned farms, which are a combined
3 40,412 acres; out of the 116,417 agricultural producers in
4 Illinois, 267 are Black; and

5 WHEREAS, As farming has become a big business, it has
6 become one of the least diverse business sectors in our State,
7 and the pressure to consolidate has reduced the ranks of
8 family and independent farmers for the past century; and

9 WHEREAS, The scarcity of African American farmers stems
10 from the troubled history of the U.S.; for sharecroppers,
11 farming was associated with the poverty and the backbreaking
12 labor of slavery; for those who owned land, unequal treatment
13 made it difficult to retain property and earn a living, and
14 racial discrimination played a major role in driving Black
15 farmers off of their land; as recently as the mid-1990s, Black
16 farmers who agreed to sell crops would routinely be offered
17 lower prices at market than white farmers for equivalent
18 products; and

19 WHEREAS, In a landmark legal settlement, the U.S.
20 Department of Agriculture acknowledged that it had abused
21 Black farmers for generations when agents approved only a
22 fraction of financing requests, delayed loans until after the
23 planting season, and withheld other key payments; and

1 WHEREAS, Movements in Illinois and across the country have
2 fought to rectify historic discrimination against Black
3 farmers and to develop interest in farming in young people and
4 have worked to innovate in the farming space, including the
5 development of Black-oriented urban agriculture, vertical
6 farming, and microfarms in order to deliver fresher and
7 healthier foods to communities and consumers in need of better
8 food choices; and

9 WHEREAS, Black farmers can play a leading role in building
10 local healthy food systems and creating regional networks of
11 jobs, food, agricultural goods, and related opportunities;
12 therefore, be it

13 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL
14 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we declare April 23
15 through April 29, 2023 as Black Farmers Week in the State of
16 Illinois; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That we encourage the people of Illinois and
18 their representatives in government to learn about the history
19 of Black farming communities and the contributions made by
20 African Americans to agriculture in the United States; and be
21 it further

1 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
2 presented to the Illinois Department of Agriculture and the
3 National Black Farmers Association.