



WHEREAS, Black History Month is an annual celebration which recognizes the great strides African Americans in Illinois have made over the past 163 years, beginning with the Emancipation Proclamation, through the Civil Rights Movement, up until today; and,

WHEREAS, Black History Month evolved from "Negro History Week" in 1926, created by historian and University of Chicago alumnus Carter G. Woodson - the second week of February was chosen because it marked the birthdays of President Abraham Lincoln and abolitionist Frederick Douglas; and,

WHEREAS, history has been shaped, defined, and continues to be influenced by numerous Black Illinoisans, including leaders and innovators like Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable, John W.E. Thomas, Ida B. Wells, Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, Oscar De Priest, Jesse Owens, Ellsworth Dansby, Gwendolyn Brooks, Ernie Banks, Lorraine Hansberry, Harold Washington, Carol Moseley Braun, Barack Obama, Jackie Joyner-Kersey, Miles Davis and many others whose cultural impact, political leadership, and social justice advocacy have become intrinsic to our history as a state and nation; and,

WHEREAS, since our State's inception, Black-owned businesses have similarly played an instrumental role in our communities by making innovative products and providing high-quality services helping to make the Illinois economy dynamic and vibrant; and,

WHEREAS, Black History Month is an opportunity to pay tribute to the over 179,000 Black-owned businesses in Illinois and to encourage all Illinoisans to support Black-owned businesses in February and year-round; and,

WHEREAS, Illinois is fully committed to the growth and advancement of Black-owned businesses and enterprises through programs offered by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Office of Minority Economic Empowerment, aimed at connecting Black business startups, entrepreneurs and business owners with resources to grow and thrive; and,

WHEREAS, Black History Month serves as an important opportunity for Illinoisans to recognize the importance of Black-owned businesses and demonstrate a commitment to their success;

THEREFORE, I, JB Pritzker, Governor of the State of Illinois, and I, Juliana Stratton, Lieutenant Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim the month of February 2026 as **Illinois Black History Month**, celebrating the impact of Black Illinoisans and Black-owned businesses across our state, past, present, and future.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Illinois to be affixed.



Done at the Capitol in the City of Springfield,
this THIRTY-FIRST day of JANUARY, in
the Year of Our Lord, two thousand and
TWENTY-SIXTH, and of the State of Illinois,
two hundred and SEVENTH.


SECRETARY OF STATE


LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR


GOVERNOR