

BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (BED)

Resolution **BED-24-19**

SUPPORTING REPARATIONS TO PROMOTE JUSTICE AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

WHEREAS, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) passed resolution 21-06, IN SUPPORT OF INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC ACTION ON SYSTEMATIC RACISM, which urged “Congress to have US Department of the Treasury with the assistance of other federal departments to do full accounting of the all the benefits that were promised to Black Americans that were never received and the cost that systematic injustice has had on the community’ and included developing a plan to distribute such funds;

WHEREAS, slavery is America’s original sin, and enslaved African Americans were not compensated while many slaveholders were compensated;

WHEREAS, more than 4 million Africans and their descendants were enslaved in the United States and the colonies that became the United States from 1619 to 1865;

WHEREAS, slavery and post-slavery discrimination created an historic unfair economic, legal, and political imbalance against African Americans;

WHEREAS, not only were African American’s sold and bought as property, but African Americans in this nation have been lynched, beaten, wrongfully incarcerated, intentionally deprived of bare necessities, and treated merely as second class citizens;

WHEREAS, African Americans have suffered through the long-standing generational impacts of chattel slavery as well as well as from the deprivation of basic civil rights, Jim Crow laws, lynchings, segregation, housing discrimination and redlining, unequal pay, voter suppression, and police bias and brutality, and many other injustices that are too numerous to list;

WHEREAS, the first recorded reparations to a former enslaved African were Belinda Royall in 1783 by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts;

WHEREAS, in 1865, soon after the American Civil War ended, General William T. Sherman issued Special Field Orders No. 15 to grant former enslaved African Americans 40 acres and a mule, but legislation to implement the Order was vetoed by President Andrew Johnson;

WHEREAS, under the leadership of Callie House, the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association filed the first documented Black reparations litigation in the United States on the federal level in 1915;

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WHEREAS, first introduced in 1989, U.S. Representative John Conyers (D-MI) was the chief sponsor of H.R.40 for nearly thirty years; the bill would establish the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act for the purpose to examine the merits of introducing reparations to African-Americans for slavery;

WHEREAS, the current chief sponsor of H.R.40 is U.S. Representative Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX) and has over 100 cosponsors;

WHEREAS, in 2020, California established the first-in-the-nation state task force to study historic and systemic racism and develop recommendations and issued a final report in 2023;

WHEREAS, a reparations committee for the City of San Francisco issued a report in 2023;

WHEREAS, in 2021, Evanston, Illinois became the first city in the United States to pay 'reparations' to African American residents or their descendants who were determined to be victims of alleged unfair housing practices; and

WHEREAS, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) core mission is to address policies that impact the "general welfare" of African Americans and address historic injustices against African Americans.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) supports local, state, and federal government reparations to promote justice and equal opportunity for African Americans;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL supports effort to gain the much needed information to understand the total economic impact that previous policies and actions have had against African Americans; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials as appropriate.

Resolution ID: BED-24-19

Sponsored by: Sen. James Sanders, Jr (NY)

Policy Committee: Business and Economic Development (BED)