



HR0453

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1

HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, Slavery provided much of the revenue for the
3 young State of Illinois and severed ties between enslaved
4 people and their ancestors, resulting in the erasure of family
5 histories for both enslaved people and their descendants; and

6 WHEREAS, The U.S. has a social responsibility and duty
7 towards African American descendants of enslaved individuals
8 to provide the public service of assisting Black citizens in
9 reconnecting with their ancestral history; the State of
10 Illinois has an equal responsibility to Black Illinoisans; and

11 WHEREAS, Although Illinois is a northern state, slavery
12 was prevalent within its boundaries before the Northwest
13 Ordinance of 1787, and enslaved individuals still worked the
14 salt springs of the Illinois Salines until 1825; slavery in
15 the Illinois Salines was permitted because it provided as much
16 as a third of the yearly revenue for the young State;
17 indentured servitude at the salt springs continued until 1870;
18 this history of slavery in Illinois deepens the responsibility
19 of the State to assist African American citizens in recovering
20 their lost history; and

21 WHEREAS, Since the first direct-to-consumer genetic
22 ancestry test was pioneered in 2000, technological

1 capabilities have vastly improved, enabling refined genetic
2 genealogy that can trace ancestral connections over the past
3 500 years; given this advancement in technology, the U.S.,
4 honoring its moral obligation to descendants of enslaved
5 Africans, is now exceptionally positioned to facilitate this
6 reconnection through a genealogy-based pilot program; and

7 WHEREAS, In addition to restoring a sense of personal
8 belonging and ethnic identity, both being critical for
9 psychological well-being, genetic genealogical evidence
10 provides descendants of enslaved African Americans with robust
11 genetic evidentiary support of their African family origins;
12 several African countries, including Ghana, Sierra Leone,
13 Gabon, and Eritrea have begun offering citizenship to
14 individuals who can trace their ancestry back to their
15 respective country, including ancestry traced through genetic
16 genealogy; improvements in genetic genealogical technology
17 provide new found support for the desire expressed by
18 president Abraham Lincoln in the Emancipation Proclamation to
19 establish a voluntary repatriation program for African
20 descendants to return to their African ancestral homelands;
21 and

22 WHEREAS, Nearly all Black Americans can successfully trace
23 their genetic ancestry to one or more African countries;
24 today, there are currently 42 million African American

1 descendants of those enslaved in the U.S.; the genetic
2 analyses completed in the Genetic Consequences of the
3 Transatlantic Slave Trade in the Americas study by Steven
4 Micheletti and colleagues found that African Americans tend to
5 have ancestry from four main regions in Atlantic Africa,
6 including Nigeria, Senegambia (Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau,
7 and Senegal), Coastal West Africa (Sierra Leone, Ghana, Côte
8 d'Ivoire, and Liberia), and the Congo region, which includes
9 Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; approximately
10 71% of African American 23andMe research participants had
11 detectable segments of DNA that are identical with current
12 ethnolinguistic groups from all four Atlantic African regions
13 stemming from a common ancestor; as documented by Jazlyn
14 Mooney and her colleagues in their study On the Number of
15 Genealogical Ancestors Tracing to the Source Groups of an
16 Admixed Population, there is a high probability, over 97.5%,
17 that an average African American can trace their ancestry back
18 to at least one African ancestor from each of eight to 12
19 generations ago culminating in an approximate total of 269
20 African ancestors within this timeframe; and

21 WHEREAS, Approximately 15% of Black adults in the U.S.
22 have taken consumer genetic genealogy tests; African Americans
23 should not be economically burdened to obtain information
24 regarding their ancestral history, which was forcibly taken
25 from them through practices of slavery that economically

1 benefited the growing United States; and

2 WHEREAS, Reparations has been granted towards other groups
3 residing in the U.S., yet African Americans have never been
4 compensated to redress the racial harms enacted upon their
5 person during times of slavery; while white slave owners were
6 compensated for the emancipation of their slaves, enslaved
7 individuals only had access to social support via the
8 Freedmen's Bureau Act of 1865 and 1866, which provided basic
9 needs including food, clothing, and shelter, due to the
10 displacement of southerners after the Civil War; while the
11 Evacuation Claims Act of 1948 and the Civil Liberties Act of
12 1988 paid reparations to Japanese Americans, up to \$20,000 per
13 survivor, and the Indian Claims Commission allocates
14 approximately \$1,000 per person, enslaved persons of African
15 descent and their descendants have never received monetary
16 compensation for the atrocities committed against them prior
17 to the abolishment of slavery; this is despite there having
18 been over 10 million African Americans human trafficked from
19 their families and homeland only to be forced to build the
20 infrastructure of America and generate wealth for early white
21 Americans; in 1989, H.R. 40 was introduced to establish a
22 commission to investigate the impacts of enslavement and to
23 evaluate proposals for reparation; though this resolution has
24 been introduced for decades, it has not been passed; and

1 WHEREAS, It is technologically straightforward and a moral
2 imperative to rectify the erasure of family histories
3 resulting from slavery; it is now possible to establish a
4 family roots genealogy pilot program that can equip
5 descendants of enslaved African Americans with robust genetic
6 evidentiary support of their African family origins; Dr.
7 LaKisha David, an assistant professor at the University of
8 Illinois (U of I) Urbana-Champaign in the Department of
9 Anthropology, is a distinguished expert on reuniting African
10 Americans with long lost kin in Africa through autosomal DNA
11 genetic testing; she is a former postdoctoral fellow of
12 Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications of Genetics and
13 Genomics at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School
14 of Medicine; she will be the principal investigator in
15 establishing this genealogy-based family roots program; U of
16 I's Department of Anthropology has expressed their commitment
17 to these efforts and interest in ways they can continue to
18 serve both reparative and decolonizing efforts of the State
19 more generally; and

20 WHEREAS, The procedure will begin with the collection of
21 saliva samples that will be processed at The Illinois Roy J.
22 Carver Biotechnology Center, situated in Urbana, pending
23 appropriation funding; once the processing is completed, the
24 saliva samples will be securely destroyed; the resulting data
25 will then be transferred to Nightingale, a high-performance

1 computer cluster designed for sensitive data that is housed in
2 the National Center for Supercomputing (NCSA) at the U of I at
3 Urbana Champaign; using Nightingale ensures secure storage and
4 provides powerful computation while adhering to the Health
5 Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)
6 regulations; the sample will be accompanied by a unique
7 identifying code rather than participants' personal
8 information; nongenetic data for this project will be stored
9 in the U of I at Urbana-Champaign Research Electronic Data
10 Capture (REDCap), a highly secure and robust web-based
11 research data collection and management system; Illinois
12 REDCap is among the systems and services that meet
13 requirements established by HIPAA; participants logging in
14 will receive results that are hosted on a HIPAA-compliant
15 platform; for the protection of all participants, DNA samples
16 collected may not be subjected for subpoenas or accessed for
17 any other purposes; and

18 WHEREAS, Researchers cannot release or use information,
19 documents, or samples that may identify participants in any
20 action or suit unless the participant consents; researchers
21 also cannot provide data as evidence unless participants have
22 agreed; this protection includes federal, state, local, civil,
23 criminal, administrative, legislative, or other proceedings;
24 this does not stop participants from willingly releasing
25 information about their involvement in this research and does

1 not prevent participants from having access to their own
2 information; and

3 WHEREAS, The U of I at Urbana-Champaign, established as a
4 land-grant institution through the Morrill Act of 1862, was
5 entrusted with a mission to democratize higher education and
6 serve the public interest across Illinois and beyond; despite
7 this intent, U of I's historical record is marked by periods of
8 exclusion and insufficient representation of African Americans
9 that cast a shadow over its commitment to true inclusivity;
10 these specialized centers, backed by the State of Illinois,
11 hold the potential to make amends and realign with the
12 original vision of the land-grant mission; the centers carry a
13 paramount duty to redress past neglect, actively engage with
14 the African American community, and to emphasize the profound
15 need to reconnect individuals to their ancestral roots;
16 through this initiative, the centers have an opportunity, and
17 indeed an obligation, to play a transformative role in
18 facilitating understanding, reconnection, and healing, and, in
19 doing so, work towards rectifying the U of I's historical
20 shortcomings in relation to a community with a deeply
21 impactful, yet often sidelined, history; therefore, be it

22 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
23 HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
24 we urge support for the Family Roots Genealogy Pilot Program

1 as it provides African American descendants of enslaved
2 individuals the opportunity to trace their roots back to their
3 ancestral homelands, to reconnect with their ancestral
4 heritage, and to promote their well-being; and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be presented to
6 the Family Roots Genealogy Pilot Program as a symbol of our
7 esteem and respect.