

2025-J439

Senate Resolution No. 439

BY: Senator STEWART-COUSINS

MEMORIALIZING Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim March 2025, as Women's History Month in the State of New York, recognizing the invaluable contributions of women in all aspects of society

WHEREAS, March is Women's History Month, and each year New York State officially sets aside time to recognize the unique contributions that women have made to New York State and beyond; and

WHEREAS, New York State has a distinguished history of monumental achievements in the area of women's rights; and has long been at the forefront of the women's rights movement, leading the nation in legislative and social advancements for gender equality; and

WHEREAS, The social and political leadership of women has strengthened our democracy, from the abolitionists who fought for the freedom and racial equality of all Americans and the suffragists who fought for the 19th Amendment in 1920 to modern-day leaders shaping policy and governance at all levels; and

WHEREAS, Throughout history, women have played an integral role in shaping politics, education, science, law, medicine, business, technology, literature, arts, and sports, breaking barriers and driving progress despite systemic obstacles; and

WHEREAS, Recognizing Women's History Month provides an opportunity to highlight, honor, and celebrate the vital and extraordinary achievements of women past and present, ensuring that their stories are included in our national and state narratives and serve as inspiration for future generations; and

WHEREAS, Breaking barriers in education, Emma Willard opened the Troy Female Seminary in Troy, New York in 1821, the first endowed institution for the education of women, expanding opportunities for women's academic advancement; and

WHEREAS, In 1848 in New York, the first women's rights convention was held at Seneca Falls to secure for all women a number of civil rights including the right to vote, access to education, property ownership, and legal rights; and

WHEREAS, Racial justice has been a crucial and ongoing fight within the women's rights movement, as women of color have historically faced both gender and racial discrimination; and Sojourner Truth, an abolitionist and civil rights advocate who challenged racial and gender inequality, spoke out for the abolition of slavery and suffrage for all women, famously delivering her "Ain't I a Woman?" speech in 1851; and Harriet Tubman, a courageous abolitionist, led enslaved individuals to freedom through the Underground Railroad during the 1850s and 1860s, ultimately settling in Auburn, New York, where she continued her humanitarian work; and

WHEREAS, Pioneering advancements in education and medicine, Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman in the United States to earn a medical degree in 1849 from Geneva Medical College in New York, paving the way for women in medicine; and Dr. Mary E. Walker, the first female United States Army surgeon in 1863, was awarded the Congressional Medal

of Honor in 1865, becoming the only woman in U.S. history to receive this distinction; and

WHEREAS, Belva Lockwood became the first woman to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1880, advocating for women's rights in the legal profession; and

WHEREAS, Ida B. Wells, a journalist, civil rights activist, and former resident of Brooklyn, fought for social, economic, and racial equality for African Americans and all women while co-founding the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909, highlighting the intersection of civil rights and women's rights; and

WHEREAS, Between 1911-1919, Madam C.J. Walker, an African American entrepreneur and former resident of Harlem, became the first woman of any race to become a self-made millionaire due to the success of her hair care products and the Madam C.J. Walker Manufacturing Company; and furthermore, Madam C.J. Walker's Mansion, Villa Lewaro, located in Irvington, New York, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and stands as a symbol of optimism, perseverance, and the resilience of the American entrepreneurial spirit; and

WHEREAS, In 1917, New York guaranteed women the right to vote in all elections and in the following year the first two women, Ida Sammis and Mary Lilly, were elected to the New York State Legislature and became the first women to then serve in 1919; and

WHEREAS, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were two of many women leading the campaign for women's suffrage throughout the mid-to-late 19th century, advocating for the right to vote, which culminated in the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920; and Maud Wood

Park became the first national president of the League of Women Voters in 1920, helping to establish an organization that continues to empower voters and defend democracy; and

WHEREAS, Margaret Sanger, a pioneer in birth control education and advocacy, opened the first birth control clinic in the United States in Brooklyn in 1916, leading to the establishment of the Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau in New York City in 1923; and

WHEREAS, Eleanor Roosevelt, a humanitarian and diplomat, served as the United States Delegate to the United Nations from 1946 to 1952, and played a pivotal role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948; and

WHEREAS, Rhoda Fox Graves, in 1934, became the first woman to be elected to the New York State Senate; she served from 1935 to 1948, sitting in the 158th, 159th, 160th, 161st, 162nd, 163rd, 164th, 165th, and 166th New York State Legislatures; and

WHEREAS, In 1955, Bessie Buchanan was the first African-American woman to serve in the New York State Legislature; and

WHEREAS, Constance Baker Motely, a Civil rights lawyer and the first Black woman elected to the New York State Senate in 1964, was appointed to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York in January 1966, by President Lyndon B. Johnson and was confirmed by the United States Senate in August 1966, making her the first Black woman to serve as a federal judge in the United States; and

WHEREAS, In 1967, Muriel Siebert became the first woman to own a seat on the New York Stock Exchange, opening the door for women to gain

positions of greater economic power; and

WHEREAS, In 1968, New York State Assemblywoman Shirley Chisholm became the first Black woman elected to Congress and in 1972, she ran for President of the United States, another first for Black women; and

WHEREAS, In 1970, New York City was the site of the first Women's Strike for Equality in which 50,000 people marched for equal rights; and

WHEREAS, In 1978, Olga Mendez became the first Puerto Rican woman to serve in the New York State Legislature; in 1983, New York State women legislators established the Legislative Women's Caucus to improve the participation of women in all areas of government, support issues that benefit women and provide a network of support for women in the State Legislature; and

WHEREAS, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a Brooklyn native, was a trailblazing attorney and jurist who dedicated her career to advancing gender equality and civil rights and successfully argued landmark cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, challenging laws that discriminated on the basis of sex and laying the legal foundation for gender equity; in 1993, she made history as the second woman and the first Jewish woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, In 1999, the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians was held to improve the status of women in history and in the historical professions; and

WHEREAS, Hillary Rodham Clinton, has been a trailblazer in American politics and public service and in 2000, she became the first woman elected as a U.S. Senator for New York State; and

WHEREAS, In 2007, Ellen Young was the first Asian-American woman to serve in the New York State Legislature; and

WHEREAS, In 2009, Sonia Sotomayor, a Bronx native, became the first Latina and the third woman appointed to the United States Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, New Yorker Edith Windsor fought to expand marriage equality in the United States prior to the Marriage Equality Act of New York which became law in 2011; and

WHEREAS, In 2015, New Yorker Loretta Elizabeth Lynch was appointed as Attorney General of the United States, becoming the first African-American woman to serve in this esteemed position; and

WHEREAS, Avril Haines of New York City became the first woman to serve as the Director of National Intelligence on January 21, 2021; furthermore, on January 26, 2021, Janet Yellen of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, became the first woman to serve as the U.S. Secretary of Treasury; and

WHEREAS, Brenda K. Sannes became the first woman to serve as Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of New York in 2022; Nusrat Choudhury became the first Muslim American woman and the first Bangladeshi American to serve as a U.S. District Judge in the Eastern District of New York in 2023; Meredith Vacca became the first Asian American woman to serve as a Judge of the Western District of New York in 2024; and

WHEREAS, The New York Liberty won their first WNBA Championship in 2024, marking a significant milestone in women's sports; and

WHEREAS, Currently, 50% of statewide elected officials are women; a

testament to the growing representation and leadership of women in New York State government; notably, each of these leaders made history as the first woman elected to their respective positions, breaking barriers and paving the way for future generations of women in public service; and

WHEREAS, 2025 marks the 105th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which guaranteed women the right to vote in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Today, 73 women serve in the New York State Legislature, 51 Assemblywomen and 22 Senators, holding leadership positions in both houses and bringing the diverse experiences of women into law and public policy; and

WHEREAS, The extraordinary achievements of these trailblazing women-spanning politics, law, medicine, business, civil rights, journalism, education, and activism-have shaped the course of history and continue to inspire future generations; the collective achievements and efforts of these women have expanded rights, shattered barriers, and strengthened democracy, ensuring a more just and equitable society for all; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim March 2025, as Women's History Month in the State of New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor of the State of New York; and the Legislative Women's Caucus of New York State.