

2017-J4871

Senate Resolution No. 4871

BY: Senator COMRIE

COMMEMORATING the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, commonly referred to as the Fair Housing Act, in conjunction with the observance of National Fair Housing Month, April 2018

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, commonly referred to as the Fair Housing Act, in conjunction with the observance of National Fair Housing Month, April 2018; and

WHEREAS, In 1968, President Lyndon Johnson set his pen upon the Civil Rights Act, thereunto evoking the writs of history, channeling the life's cause of a humble visionary dedicated to true justice, the then-recently-late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., each bold stroke echoing to tell a restless nation that the battle for equality under the law had, at least partially, been won; and

WHEREAS, President Johnson, signing the landmark civil rights legislation, professed to his country that "We have come some of the way-not near all of it," a truth that stands as resolutely today as it did half a century ago; and

WHEREAS, Each year in April, we come together as a community, a State and a Nation to recommit ourselves to that goal which inspired us

in the aftermath of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's assassination in 1968: to eliminate housing discrimination and create equal opportunity in every community; and

WHEREAS, Fundamentally, fair housing means that every person can live free; this means communities across the State of New York are open and welcoming, free from housing discrimination and hostility; and

WHEREAS, This also means that each one of us, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status, and disability, has access to neighborhoods of opportunity, where our children can attend quality schools, our environment allows us to be healthy, and economic opportunities and self-sufficiency can grow; and

WHEREAS, Most individuals or families invest and hold their wealth in the equity of the homes they purchase, the wealth of black families today is only five percent of the wealth of white families-an immense discrepancy directly rooted in the history of housing discrimination in the twentieth century; and

WHEREAS, The unscrupulous actors that brought about the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent recession, while harmful to many, knowingly and disproportionately targeted homebuyers of color; and

WHEREAS, These reverse-discriminatory practices of sub-prime mortgage lending were, in essence, the modern equivalent to state-sponsored redlining and race-based housing discrimination, and decimated what wealth these historically deprived families had been able to accumulate since the passage of the Fair Housing Act; and

WHEREAS, The lasting effects of housing segregation are not limited

to neighborhood composition or wealth distribution, but also extend deeply into the modern realities of poverty and school segregation; and

WHEREAS, In some cases, current levels of housing segregation are the same as they were decades ago , school segregation rates have drastically increased , and the wealth disparity between black or Latino families and white families has widened; and

WHEREAS, The incongruence in rates of homeownership that currently exists between whites and people of color is not significantly different than it was ten years after the Fair housing Act was signed into law, with 68% of whites owning homes, but only 46% and 42% of blacks and Hispanics, respectively; and

WHEREAS, Fifty years after its passage, the portion of the Fair Housing Act which calls for deliberate policies and actions to achieve the goal of integration has not been realized, a reality which beseeches us to strive toward a future of true integration that reflects the needs of our State and our Nation today; and

WHEREAS, Just last month, March of 2018, a lawsuit was filed against Facebook by the National Fair Housing Alliance and its partners for allowing online real estate listings to discriminate against specifically protected classes of people; and

WHEREAS, This case illustrates the pernicious evolution of housing discrimination since the Fair Housing Act became law-from de jure to de facto-transforming from blatantly discriminatory laws, policies, and attitudes, to tacit or indirect means of segregating communities; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, recently removed the phrase "free from discrimination" from the mission of his

Department, eschewing past progress and lowering future expectations for housing justice; and

WHEREAS, The practice of fair housing is not simply a tool in eradicating discrimination, it is a means of lifting up communities, uniting divided peoples, and extending, through the letter and spirit of the law, historically exclusive benefits and privileges to all people; and

WHEREAS, The true intent and spirit of the Fair Housing Act must not only be embraced by New Yorkers during the month of April, but year round, and year after year, until an integrated and equitable society is achieved, where fairness in housing is available to those of any race, color, nation, religion, sex, disability, or family status; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Fair Housing Act), in conjunction with the observance of National Fair Housing Month, April 2018.