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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 229 Session of 2022

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INTRODUCED BY SAPPEY, BULLOCK, RABB, MILLARD, HENNESSEY, KINSEY, GUENST, M. MACKENZIE, SOLOMON, SCHLOSSBERG, GILLEN, KIM, HOHENSTEIN, McNEILL, SANCHEZ, HILL-EVANS, MADDEN, SAMUELSON, MENTZER, BURGOS, PARKER AND DELLOSO, SEPTEMBER 19, 2022

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, SEPTEMBER 19, 2022

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A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing the month of September 2022 as "Transcontinental  
2 Underground Railroad Month" in Pennsylvania.

3 WHEREAS, The trans-Atlantic slave trade began as early as the  
4 15th century, introducing a system of slavery that was  
5 commercialized, racialized and inherited; and

6 WHEREAS, People were forcefully abducted from Africa,  
7 enslaved in the American colonies and exploited to work in the  
8 production of crops, such as tobacco and cotton; and

9 WHEREAS, Although the Commonwealth passed a law in 1780 that  
10 gradually eliminated slavery, the existing 6,000 enslaved people  
11 in this Commonwealth remained enslaved and the enslaved people's  
12 registered children would be enslaved until their 28th  
13 birthdays; and

14 WHEREAS, Although a person could no longer legally import  
15 enslaved people, they could buy and sell those who had been  
16 registered after 1780; and

17 WHEREAS, The law freed few enslaved people immediately; and

1       WHEREAS, The Commonwealth continued to tolerate and profit  
2 from the labor of enslaved people for decades and many  
3 Commonwealth cities enacted legislation that restricted and  
4 oppressed free people of color; and

5       WHEREAS, During the era of slavery in the United States, the  
6 Underground Railroad covertly operated as a network of places,  
7 routes and people that assisted African Americans who were  
8 enslaved to escape to freedom; and

9       WHEREAS, The term Underground Railroad was used  
10 metaphorically as "conductors," which included a racially  
11 diverse group of abolitionists, transported and guided the  
12 "passengers" traveling along the routes; and

13       WHEREAS, "Station masters" hid the freedom seekers at  
14 "stations" which included homes, barns, churches and businesses;  
15 and

16       WHEREAS, Freedom seekers who arrived at the safe houses were  
17 referred to as "cargo"; and

18       WHEREAS, This Commonwealth was a strategic and historic  
19 location of freedom through the Underground Railroad; and

20       WHEREAS, The Underground Railroad traced across this  
21 Commonwealth in a clandestine network that helped African  
22 Americans realize freedom in this Commonwealth and elsewhere;  
23 and

24       WHEREAS, Organizations such as the American Anti-Slavery  
25 Society, the Free Produce Society of Pennsylvania, the  
26 Philadelphia Free Produce Association of Friends, the  
27 Pennsylvania Hall Association, the Pennsylvania Society for  
28 Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, the Pennsylvania Yearly  
29 Meeting of Progressive Friends, Germantown Quaker Petition  
30 Against Slavery and the Vigilant Committee of Philadelphia

1 worked tirelessly toward abolition within this Commonwealth; and

2 WHEREAS, Events and sites associated with the Underground  
3 Railroad can be found in every county in this Commonwealth; and

4 WHEREAS, The Underground Railroad was integral in the freedom  
5 and advancement of African American people in the past, as well  
6 as today; and

7 WHEREAS, The Commonwealth should show appreciation for the  
8 inspiring efforts of the people of this Commonwealth and all of  
9 those from around the world who have committed themselves to  
10 document and share the Underground Railroad through the  
11 Pennsylvania Civil War Sesquicentennial and Quest for Freedom  
12 programs that connected Underground Railroad sites across this  
13 Commonwealth, the National Park Service's National Underground  
14 Railroad Network to Freedom program that lists 43 sites and  
15 facilities in this Commonwealth and the United Nations  
16 Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Sites of  
17 Memory designations; and

18 WHEREAS, Commonwealth agencies, institutions and  
19 organizations such as the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum  
20 Commission, the Department of Community and Economic Development  
21 and the 14 Frederick Douglass Institutes across the Pennsylvania  
22 State System of Higher Education continue to educate young  
23 people about the Commonwealth's role and leadership; and

24 WHEREAS, "Transcontinental Underground Railroad Month"  
25 provides an opportunity for a worldwide open dialogue that  
26 illuminates the hopes that arise from freedom for all people;  
27 therefore be it

28 RESOLVED (the Senate concurring), That the General Assembly  
29 of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania recognize the month of  
30 September 2022 as "Transcontinental Underground Railroad Month"

1 in Pennsylvania; and be it further

2 RESOLVED, That the General Assembly honor all of those who

3 have fought and continue to fight for the freedom of all people.