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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 144 Session of  
2021

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INTRODUCED BY RABB, STURLA, HILL-EVANS, ROZZI, FREEMAN, KINSEY,  
SCHLOSSBERG, SAMUELSON, MENTZER, McNEILL, SANCHEZ, SAPPEY AND  
INNAMORATO, SEPTEMBER 28, 2021

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, SEPTEMBER 28, 2021

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A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 Commemorating the 170th anniversary of the Christiana Resistance  
2 and the brave individuals who stood up for their freedoms and  
3 the freedoms of their neighbors on September 11, 1851.

4 WHEREAS, This Commonwealth gradually abolished slavery  
5 beginning in 1780, with all enslaved Black people eventually  
6 freed by 1847, allowing Pennsylvania to become a strategic  
7 location along the Underground Railroad; and

8 WHEREAS, In an effort to appease individuals with racist  
9 ideologies and slavery supporters, Congress revised the Fugitive  
10 Slave Act in 1850 to forcibly compel residents to assist in the  
11 capture of fugitives from slavery, penalizing anyone who  
12 assisted fugitives in their escape; and

13 WHEREAS, William Parker, an abolitionist who lived in  
14 Lancaster County, after escaping slavery in Maryland, defied the  
15 draconian dictates from the Federal Government, defending the  
16 rights of his family and of all those seeking freedom from  
17 slavery; and

18 WHEREAS, Mr. Parker received assistance in his valiant work

1 from his family, friends and neighbors, a multiracial group of  
2 Pennsylvanians committed to justice and individual liberty who  
3 were sympathetic to Mr. Parker's work as a conductor for the  
4 Underground Railroad; and

5 WHEREAS, In 1849, Noah Buley, Nelson Ford, George Hammond and  
6 Joshua Hammond escaped enslavement in Maryland from farmer  
7 Edward Gorsuch and fled to this Commonwealth to avoid recapture;  
8 and

9 WHEREAS, The four fugitives eventually sought refuge at Mr.  
10 Parker's home in Christiana, Pennsylvania, after being hunted by  
11 Mr. Gorsuch for two years; and

12 WHEREAS, Mr. Gorsuch, under the authority of the Fugitive  
13 Slave Act of 1850, received a warrant to recapture these  
14 fugitives and planned to forcibly take them from Mr. Parker's  
15 home in Christiana, leading Mr. Parker to call on his neighbors  
16 to defend fellow fugitives from slavery, his family and his  
17 home; and

18 WHEREAS, A patriotic cohort of Mr. Parker's neighbors staged  
19 a successful resistance, defeating Mr. Gorsuch's posse due, in  
20 part, to a moral commitment to the values of this Commonwealth  
21 and the right of each person to their individual liberty; and

22 WHEREAS, Only one person, a white neighbor of Mr. Parker's,  
23 was tried for treason, resisting arrest and conspiracy after  
24 helping Mr. Parker to deescalate the conflict; and

25 WHEREAS, The white neighbor was found not guilty after being  
26 defended by a legal team, which included future Pennsylvania  
27 Congressman Thaddeus Stevens; and

28 WHEREAS, This resistance serves as a stellar example of  
29 Pennsylvanians standing by their neighbors and combating  
30 injustice in this Commonwealth and beyond; and

1       WHEREAS, More than 170 years later, as the fight for racial  
2 justice still rages on, the Christiana Resistance not only  
3 represents a proud point of history for this Commonwealth, but  
4 also provides an example of the power of unified voice and  
5 action among Pennsylvanians who stand for personal liberty,  
6 fairness and justice; therefore be it

7       RESOLVED (the Senate concurring), That the General Assembly  
8 commemorate the 170th anniversary of the Christiana Resistance  
9 and the brave individuals who stood up for their freedoms and  
10 the freedoms of their neighbors on September 11, 1851; and be it  
11 further

12       RESOLVED, That the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of  
13 Pennsylvania call on all Pennsylvanians to remember the legacy  
14 of those patriots who fought against the racist policies and  
15 ideologies imposed on them by their government; and be it  
16 further

17       RESOLVED, That as systemic racism, white supremacy and hate  
18 continue in our Commonwealth and our nation, the General  
19 Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania call on all people  
20 to join in our continued fight toward racial justice and harmony  
21 today.