Senate Resolution 578

By: Senators Jackson of the 41st, Jones II of the 22nd and Halpern of the 39th

A RESOLUTION

Supporting the goals and ideals of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day; and for other purposes.

WHEREAS, an estimated 60,000 Georgians are living with HIV/AIDS, necessitating efforts at the state and local levels to ensure access to housing and health care; and

WHEREAS, Georgia ranks second in the nation for its rate of new HIV diagnoses despite being only the ninth most populated state; and

WHEREAS, socioeconomic factors such as income inequality, poverty, and lack of access to HIV prevention education and basic health services, along with cultural factors like homophobia, transphobia, and racism, all pose significant challenges to combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic; and

WHEREAS, each year, nearly 40,000 people in the United States become newly diagnosed with HIV; and

WHEREAS, since the beginning of the HIV epidemic in the United States, racial and ethnic minorities have been disproportionately affected by the disease; and

WHEREAS, the Affordable Care Act's expansion of Medicaid and reforms to the individual insurance market have helped lower the uninsured rates for non-elderly Black Americans by more than one-third between 2013 and 2016, leading to better health outcomes for Black Americans living with or at risk of HIV; and

WHEREAS, Black Americans are diagnosed with HIV later than their white counterparts, face greater barriers in accessing care and treatment, and experience higher morbidity and mortality outcomes; and

WHEREAS, Black Americans account for nearly half of all those who have died from HIV in the United States since the beginning of the epidemic; and

WHEREAS, Black, gay, and bisexual men are more affected by HIV than any other group in the United States, accounting for a higher proportion of HIV diagnoses, those living with HIV, those ever diagnosed with AIDS, and HIV/AIDS-related deaths; and

WHEREAS, homophobia, stigma, and discrimination pose major obstacles to HIV testing, treatment, and other prevention services for gay and bisexual African American men; and

WHEREAS, life-saving treatment is also a proven prevention tool, and research shows that antiretroviral drugs can reduce the amount of virus to undetectable levels (also known as viral suppression), effectively resulting in no risk of transmission of HIV; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, the Food and Drug Administration approved pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) as prevention for people who are HIV negative; and

WHEREAS, many Black Americans in Georgia live more than 100 miles from a PrEP provider; and

WHEREAS, PrEP can reduce the risk of HIV infection for HIV-negative individuals by up to 99 percent; and

WHEREAS, among Black women, the leading transmission category of HIV infection is heterosexual contact followed by intravenous drug use; and

WHEREAS, research indicates that the high incarceration rates of Black men may contribute to the disproportionate rates of HIV infections among Black women; and

WHEREAS, transgender women in the United States are at high risk for HIV; and

WHEREAS, socioeconomic issues impact the rates of HIV infection among African Americans in the South and throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, in July 2015, the *National HIV/AIDS Strategy for the United States: Updated to 2020* was released and included actions and goals to reduce HIV-related disparities and inequalities; and

WHEREAS, National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day was founded by five national organizations in 1999 to provide capacity-building assistance to Black communities and organizations; and

WHEREAS, each year on February 7, individuals, organizations, and policymakers across the nation participate in National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day to promote HIV education, testing, community involvement, and treatment in Black communities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body support the goals and ideals of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of this body encourage local governments within our jurisdiction, including their public health agencies and media organizations, to recognize and support this day to publicize its importance among their communities and to encourage individuals, especially Black Americans, to get tested for HIV.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of this body commend the work of AIDS service organizations, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, health care providers, community health centers, and health departments that are providing effective evidence-based prevention, treatment, care, and support services to people living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of this body support appropriate funding for HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment, research, and housing, including community-based approaches to fight stigma, discrimination, racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of this body encourage comprehensive prevention, treatment, and care strategies that empower public health workers, educators, faith leaders, and other stakeholders to engage their communities to help decrease violence,

discrimination, and stigma toward individuals who disclose their sexual orientation, gender identity, or HIV status.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to the public and the press.