

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 779

Recognizing the contributions of Black people to the musical heritage of the United States and the need for greater access to music education for Black students and designating June 2026 as “Black Music Month”.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 18, 2026

Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

RESOLUTION

Recognizing the contributions of Black people to the musical heritage of the United States and the need for greater access to music education for Black students and designating June 2026 as “Black Music Month”.

Whereas spirituals, ragtime, blues, jazz, gospel, classical composition, and countless other categories of music have been created or enhanced by Black people and are etched into the history and culture of the United States;

Whereas the first Africans transported to the United States came from a variety of ethnic groups with a long history of distinct and cultivated musical traditions, brought musical instruments with them, and built new musical instruments in the United States;

Whereas spirituals were a distinct response to the conditions of slavery in the United States and expressed the longing of the enslaved for spiritual and bodily freedom, for safety from harm and evil, and for relief from the hardships of slavery;

Whereas jazz, arguably the most creative and complex music that the United States has produced, combines the musical traditions of Black people in New Orleans with the creative flexibility of blues music;

Whereas masterful trumpeters Louis Armstrong and Miles Davis achieved national and international recognition with the success of “West End Blues” by Louis Armstrong in the 1920s and “So What” by Miles Davis in the late 1950s;

Whereas Thomas Dorsey, the “Father of Gospel Music”, used his composing talents to merge sacred and secular styles that created a revolution in music;

Whereas talented jazz pianist and vocalist Nat King Cole recorded more than 150 singles and sold more than 50,000,000 records;

Whereas the talent of Ella Fitzgerald, a winner of 13 Grammy Awards, is epitomized by a rendition of “Summertime”, a bluesy record accompanied by melodic vocals;

Whereas Natalie Cole, the daughter of Nat King Cole, achieved musical success in the mid-1970s as a rhythm and blues artist with the hits “This Will Be” and “Unforgettable”;

Whereas, in the 1940s, bebop evolved through jam sessions, which included trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and alto saxophonist Charlie Parker, held at clubs in Harlem, New York, such as Minton’s Playhouse;

Whereas earlier classical singers such as Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, one of the first widely known Black vocalists, and other early Black singing pioneers, including Nellie Mitchell Brown, Marie Selika Williams, Rachel Walker Turner, Marian Anderson, and Flora Batson Bergen, paved the way for the female Black concert singers who have achieved great popularity during the last 50 years;

Whereas the term “rhythm and blues” originated in the late 1940s as a way to describe recordings marketed to Black people and replaced the term “race music”;

Whereas lyrical themes in rhythm and blues often encapsulate the Black experience of pain, the quest for freedom, joy, triumphs and failures, relationships, economics, and aspiration and were popularized by artists such as Ray Charles, Ruth Brown, Etta James, and Otis Redding;

Whereas the musical virtuoso Reverend Richard Smallwood, a composer and arranger of classical gospel music, continues to inspire audiences and performers worldwide;

Whereas soul music originated in the Black community in the late 1950s and early 1960s, combines elements of Black gospel music, rhythm and blues, and jazz, and was popularized by artists such as Aretha Franklin, James Brown, Ray Charles, Sam Cooke, Bill Withers, and Jackie Wilson;

Whereas Motown, founded as a record label in 1959, evolved into a distinctive style known for the “Motown Sound”, a blend of pop and soul musical stylings made popular by prominent Black artists such as Marvin Gaye, James Mason, and Mary Wells;

Whereas go-go, developed by Black musicians in the mid-1960s and combining funk, soul, and Latin music, was popularized by artists such as Chuck Brown and Rare Essence, and is the “official music of Washington, DC”;

Whereas Harry Belafonte, a singer, actor, activist, and a supporter and confidant of Martin Luther King, Jr., throughout the civil rights movement, influenced by his Caribbean roots, popularized calypso music in the United States;

Whereas, in the early 1970s, the musical style of disco emerged and was popularized by programs such as Soul Train and by artists such as Donna Summer;

Whereas reggae is a genre of music that originated in Jamaica in the late 1960s and incorporates some of the musical elements of rhythm and blues, jazz, mento, calypso, and African music, and was popularized by artists such as Bob Marley;

Whereas rock and roll was developed from Black musical styles such as gospel and rhythm and blues and was popularized by artists such as Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Little Richard, and Jimi Hendrix;

Whereas rap, arguably the most complex and influential form of hip-hop culture, combines blues, jazz, and soul and elements of the Black musical tradition with Caribbean calypso, dub, and dance hall reggae;

Whereas the development and popularity of old-style rap combined confident beats with wordplay and storytelling, highlighting the struggle of Black youth growing up in underresourced neighborhoods;

Whereas Dayton, Ohio, known as the “Land of Funk”, helped give rise to the genre of funk as a mixture of soul,

jazz, and rhythm and blues and popularized bands such as the Ohio Players, Heatwave, Roger and Zapp, and Lakeside;

Whereas contemporary rhythm and blues, which originated in the late 1970s and combines elements of pop, rhythm and blues, soul, funk, hip hop, gospel, and electronic dance music, was popularized by artists such as Whitney Houston and Aaliyah;

Whereas Prince Rogers Nelson, a Minnesota native, was a one-of-a-kind artist who made “Purple Rain” a household name, First Avenue a landmark, and brought international fame to Minnesota’s music scene;

Whereas the incredible Billie Holiday created a cultural reset by recording “Strange Fruit”, originally a poem that depicted lynching in the Southern United States, which became the first protest song of the civil rights era;

Whereas the talented jazz artist Duke Ellington pushed boundaries with his hits “It Don’t Mean a Thing if It Ain’t Got That Swing” and “Sophisticated Lady” and received 13 Grammy Awards and the Presidential Gold Medal;

Whereas Sister Rosetta Tharpe, known as the “Godmother of Rock ’n’ Roll”, combined her distinctive guitar style with melodic blues and traditional gospel music that influenced the likes of Aretha Franklin and Chuck Berry;

Whereas Tina Turner, known as the “Queen of Rock ’n’ Roll”, stunned audiences with her powerful vocals, was the first woman or Black musician to be featured on the cover of Rolling Stone, and received 12 Grammy Awards during her lifetime;

Whereas trailblazer Florence Price was the first noted Black female composer to gain national status and the first Black woman to have her composed work performed by a major national symphony orchestra;

Whereas the classical singer Marian Anderson broke down racial barriers by performing at the Lincoln Memorial in 1939 after being denied the opportunity to sing in front of an integrated audience at the Daughters of the American Revolution Constitution Hall in Washington, DC;

Whereas country music singer Charley Pride was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2000 and has had more than 40 hits reach number 1 on the country charts;

Whereas Nina Simone, one of the most prominent and extraordinary soul singers, has music spanning more than 4 decades that impacted generations with detailed storytelling;

Whereas musician Bobby McFerrin brought joy to audiences everywhere with his smash hit “Don’t Worry Be Happy”;

Whereas famous saxophone player John Coltrane made his impact on genres like bebop, jazz, and rhythm and blues through his work such as “A Love Supreme”;

Whereas David Jolicoeur, also known as Trugoy the Dove, was a founding member of hip-hop groups De La Soul and Native Tongues and used his passion for rap music to spread positive messages within his community;

Whereas musical force Marvin Gaye used his versatility as an artist to produce hits like “I Heard It Through the Grapevine” and “Ain’t No Mountain High Enough”;

Whereas Sylvia Robinson, a New Jersey native, was an American singer, record producer, and founder of Sugar

Hill Records and is widely credited with launching the hip-hop genre internationally;

Whereas New Jersey resident Q-Tip, also known as Kamaal Fareed, along with his fellow members of A Tribe Called Quest—Phife Dawg, Jarobi White, and Ali Shaheed Muhammad—helped define uplifting and conscious hip-hop;

Whereas East Orange, New Jersey, native Whitney Houston, one of the most recognizable voices in music, sold more than 220,000,000 records worldwide, making her one of the best-selling artists of all time, and holds the Guinness World Record as the most awarded female artist with more than 400 career awards.

Whereas Camden, New Jersey, native Leon Huff and his longtime partner Kenny Gamble are Grammy-winning songwriters and producers, who founded Philadelphia International Records and produced more than 170 gold and platinum records for artists such as Billy Paul, Lou Rawls, The O’Jays, Patti LaBelle, and Phyllis Hyman;

Whereas Black Music Month was established 47 years ago by songwriter and producer Kenny Gamble, broadcaster Dyana Williams, and radio executive Ed Wright under the auspices of the Black Music Association;

Whereas the National Museum of African American Music in Nashville, Tennessee, serves as the official home of Black Music Month and is dedicated to preserving and celebrating the central role of Black music in American culture;

Whereas a recent study by the National Arts Education Data Project found that 49 percent of all students attending schools with a predominately African-American student population do not participate in school music programs;

Whereas Black students scored the lowest of all ethnicities in the most recent National Assessment for Educational Progress arts assessment;

Whereas Black students often receive a music education that does not reflect their own culture;

Whereas students who are eligible for the school lunch program established under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.) have significantly lower scores on the music portion of the National Assessment for Educational Progress arts assessment than students who are ineligible for that program, which suggests that students in low-income families are disadvantaged in the subject of music;

Whereas a study found that—

(1) nearly $\frac{2}{3}$ of music ensemble students were White and middle class, and only 15 percent of those students were Black; and

(2) only 7 percent of music teacher licensure candidates were Black; and

Whereas students of color face many barriers to accessing music education and training, especially in large urban public schools: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) recognizes—

3 (A) the contributions of Black people to
4 the musical heritage of the United States;

5 (B) the wide array of talented and popular
6 Black musical artists, composers, songwriters,

1 and musicians who are underrecognized for con-
 2 tributions to music;

3 (C) the achievements, talent, and hard
 4 work of Black pioneer artists and the obstacles
 5 that those artists overcame to gain recognition;

6 (D) the need for Black students to have
 7 greater access to, and participation in, cul-
 8 turally relevant music programs in schools
 9 across the United States; and

10 (E) Black History Month and Black Music
 11 Month as an important time—

12 (i) to celebrate the impact of the
 13 Black musical heritage on the musical her-
 14 itage of the United States; and

15 (ii) to encourage greater access to
 16 music education so that the next genera-
 17 tion may continue to greatly contribute to
 18 the musical heritage of the United States;
 19 and

20 (2) designates June 2026 as “Black Music
 21 Month”.

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