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TO: The Honorable Detroit City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director 
Legislative Policy Division Staff

DATE: April 26, 2023

RE: RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING JUNE 17 AS BLACK MALE AWARENESS DAY

Council President Mary Sheffield requested that the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) draft a RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING JUNE 17 AS BLACK MALE AWARENESS DAY.

Please contact us if we can be of any further assistance.

BY COUNCIL PRESIDENT MARY SHEFFIELD

RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING JUNE 17 AS BLACK MALE AWARENESS DAY

WHEREAS, The mission of the Detroit City Council is to promote the economic, cultural and physical welfare of Detroit's citizens through Charter-mandated legislative functions; and

WHEREAS, On April 25, 2023, the nation lost a legend, Harry Belafonte, a civil rights activist, artist, and singer at the age of 96. Reflecting upon his life is just another reminder of the tremendous contributions that Black men have made, and that their contributions represent what is truly great about America; and

WHEREAS, As a matter of fact, Crispus Attucks, who was the first to fall during the Boston Massacre on March 5, 1770, was the first man to die for our country. American greatness is reflected in the life of Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave, who's life proved instrumental to the abolitionist movement and the ultimate goal of ending slavery. Douglass' stirring speech on the hypocrisy of the Independence Day Celebration of 1852 in Rochester, New York, while Blacks were enslaved, to this day, is considered one of the greatest speeches in American history; and

WHEREAS, Elijah McCoy, born to escaped slaves in 1844, despite becoming certified as a mechanical engineer in Scotland, was unable to find work as an engineer in the United States due to racial barriers. McCoy found work as an oiler and a Fireman for the Michigan Central Railroad, where he developed his first major inventions; and

WHEREAS, After studying the inefficiencies inherent in the existing system of oiling axles, McCoy invented a lubricating cup that distributed oil evenly over the engine's moving parts. He obtained a patent for this invention, which allowed trains to run continuously for long periods of time without pausing for maintenance; and

WHEREAS, McCoy patented his invention, known as an "oil-drip cup," in 1872, and the device was an instant success. However, due to its ingeniously simple design, other railroads began creating similar versions. It was common knowledge in industry that McCoy's version of the "oil-drip cup" was the most effective, so much so, engineers began asking for "the real McCoy." All in all, McCoy established over sixty patents; and

WHEREAS, The contributions of Black men are numerous and vast, such as Garrett Morgan's inventions of the gas mask and the three-light traffic light, Dr. Charles Drew, who discovered a method of separating red blood cells from plasma and then storing the two components separately. This new process allowed blood to be stored for more than a week, which was the maximum at that time. This allowed for the development of blood banks, which have saved the lives of countless millions; and

WHEREAS, Black men have historically fought for freedom and equality with dynamic leaders such as Malcolm X, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and locally with Horace Sheffield Jr., a champion of organized labor and Mayor Coleman A. Young, who became the first Black mayor of Detroit and also disbanded the deadly and oppressive STRESS unit of the Detroit Police force that terrorized the Black community; and

WHEREAS, Counter to how Black men are often negatively depicted in news accounts, today there are dynamic and effective Black men of distinction who live among us. The negative stereotypical Black man, who is depicted as a criminal and a dredge on society is more of the exception, rather than the rule for Black men. Black men of distinction such as former President Barack Obama, a Harvard educated attorney and the nation's first Black president, Hakeem Jeffries, an American politician and attorney and a member of Kappa Alpha Psi, who was unanimously selected by his peers as the first Black man chosen as House Minority Leader, and locally with four Black men on the Detroit City Council, are all strong Black men that are the antithesis to the negative stereotypes; and

WHEREAS, The Detroit City Council believes the countless accomplishments of Black men should be reflected upon and acknowledged on Black Men Awareness Day June 17, 2023, which is a day we celebrate the great

contribution of Black men to the betterment of Detroit, the state of Michigan and the nation; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, That the Detroit City Council declares henceforth that June 17 be designated as Black Men Awareness Day, a day we celebrate the great contributions of Black men and to encourage our citizens to recognize and to applaud Black men; **THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED, Copies of this resolution shall be provided to Mayor Mike Duggan, as well as media and residents.