WHEREAS, In 2013, the Evergreen School District of Vancouver, Washington, opened the Henrietta Lacks Health and Bioscience High School, becoming the first organization to memorialize her publicly and honor her legacy; and

WHEREAS, The students of this school have called upon the Washington State Legislature to acknowledge the contribution of Henrietta Lacks' cells to medical research; and

WHEREAS, As a Black woman with cervical cancer in 1951, Lacks received medical care in a racially segregated ward of Johns Hopkins Hospital where her doctor George Gey took samples from her biopsied tumor without her consent; and

WHEREAS, Gey used these cells to create the first immortal cell line, known as the "HeLa" cell line, which has been reproduced in labs all over the world and used to develop some of the most important breakthroughs in medicine; and

WHEREAS, These breakthroughs include extensive research into the cures for cancer, treatment for HIV and AIDS, Parkinson's disease, the effects of radiation, the polio vaccine, gene mapping, and current development of a coronavirus vaccine; and

WHEREAS, As the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic brings devastation around the world and the work of medical researchers is more relevant than ever, we must recognize the impact Lacks has had on virology and immunology and the relevance on our lives today; and
WHEREAS, Though there are almost 11,000 patents to date involving use of the HeLa cell line, neither Henrietta nor her family gave consent for their use or received financial compensation; and

WHEREAS, Too often, the role of marginalized people in developing significant advances for humankind are unacknowledged;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Washington State Legislature recognize the contribution of Henrietta Lacks' cells to modern medicine and the educational, racial, and economic barriers that played a role in her story; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, As the COVID-19 vaccine begins to be distributed, let us recognize the debt we owe Henrietta Lacks and her family; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That Lacks' story is a reminder of the work left to be done in culturally-responsive medicine and education.

I, Brad Hendrickson, Secretary of the Senate, do hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of Senate Resolution 8604, adopted by the Senate February 2, 2021

BRAD HENDRICKSON
Secretary of the Senate