HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 2024-4667, by Representative Donaghy

WHEREAS, Black History Month is celebrated in Washington state and around the nation due to the efforts of Dr. Carter Woodson, who in 1926 advocated that we set aside a special period in February to recognize the history, heritage, and achievements of black people in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Woodson chose February to celebrate black history to honor the birth month of the abolitionist Frederick Douglass and President Abraham Lincoln, who signed the Emancipation Proclamation; and

WHEREAS, By the time Woodson died in 1950, this week of history had become well established, and the civil rights movement of the 1960s only strengthened the effort to explore the contributions of African Americans; and

WHEREAS, In the bicentennial year of 1976, 50 years after Woodson gave birth to the idea, President Gerald Ford expanded the week to the month of February, urging all Americans to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history"; and

WHEREAS, Much of the history of black Americans can be viewed through the lens of the long, hard struggle to reconcile the reality of slavery, Jim Crow, and segregation with the words and ideals written in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights; and

WHEREAS, Even today, almost 160 years after the last black slaves in America were emancipated, black Americans continue to struggle under the shadow of discrimination and injustice institutionalized in the past; and

WHEREAS, The Black History Month 2024 theme, "African Americans and the Arts," embraces the many impacts that black Americans have had on visual arts, music, cultural movements, and more; and

WHEREAS, Across centuries, black voices have risen in song across the hills, fields, and plains in music, and black fingers have picked out the melodies, harmonies, and rhythms of life stories, the forced assimilation of gospel, to the blues, jazz, rock, rap, and soul of today; and

WHEREAS, Tangible expressions of history, family, hope, love, fear, pain, and dreams have been brought to life at the hands of black Americans in as many mediums as can be imagined; and

WHEREAS, Tales of tribulations and triumphs, love and loss, wild adventures, and moments of quiet reflection have been sketched and stamped across the pages of our nation's history; and

WHEREAS, Black Americans have stood up, spoken out and danced across grass, pavement, floors, stages, and screens, weaving vivid tales of joy, heartbreak, humor, and everything in between, shared raw, in shades of grey, or in full color; and

WHEREAS, Black artists of all kinds continue to leave a poignant, indelible impression on our souls, culture, and the world around us, regardless of expressive form; and

WHEREAS, Black history is American history. Black culture is American culture; and

WHEREAS, This Black History Month, and every month, is a time to learn about those who came before us, and keep pushing towards a brighter, more just future;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives celebrate Black History Month and recognize the legacy and innumerable contributions of black Americans to the lives of Washingtonians, not only in February but throughout the whole year; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives honor and thank all the black individuals who participated in the shaping of the United States, as well as all black and African American active duty military personnel and veterans and others who serve, and we encourage the celebration of Black History Month in our schools, universities, communities, and neighborhoods, to foster a better understanding of that history and its importance here in Washington and throughout this nation.