

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-FIVE

**JOINT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE LIFE OF BAYARD
RUSTIN AND HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CIVIL RIGHTS
MOVEMENT**

WHEREAS, Bayard Rustin was born in West Chester, Pennsylvania on March 17, 1912. From his grandparents, Janifer and Julia Rustin, he took his Quaker values, which, in his words, "were based on the concept of a single human family and the belief that all members of that family are equal," according to Jervis Anderson in Bayard Rustin: Troubles I've Seen; and

WHEREAS, Rustin began advocating for desegregation when he was a football player in high school. Lore has it that he staged an impromptu sit-in at a restaurant that would serve his white teammates but not him. He continued his activism by protesting racial segregation in the United States Armed Forces throughout college; and

WHEREAS, Rustin was a member of the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation as well as the Congress on Racial Equity. He spoke and engaged in advocacy throughout the country, but his actions and his open embrace of his gay identity resulted in him being arrested multiple times. He even had to resign from the Fellowship of Reconciliation board; and

WHEREAS, in 1956, Rustin met Martin Luther King, Jr. Rustin helped introduce King to the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. He worked with King to organize the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1956 and 1957. King and Rustin parted ways in 1960, but their paths would cross again; and

WHEREAS, Rustin was one of the key organizers of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. He started planning it in 1962, with the goal of uniting the large civil rights organizations of the time. Given his past and the recognition of his homosexuality by other leaders of the movement, he was forced to serve mostly behind the scenes as deputy director, but that did not diminish his enthusiasm. Rustin and his team coordinated much of the logistics for the march, down to the manual used by bus captains to know how they should set up transportation to and from Washington; and

WHEREAS, the March on Washington was a great success. As many as 300,000 marchers showed up, and many of the great speeches of the Civil Rights Movement were given on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Bayard Rustin was in the wings making sure everything went smoothly, and he read the marchers' demands to the assembled demonstrators; and

WHEREAS, from 1965 to 1979, Rustin served as the head of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations' African American constituency group. Serving alongside A. Philip Randolph until his passing in 1979, Rustin worked to racially integrate unions and promote unions among African Americans; and

WHEREAS, Rustin served on several humanitarian missions to Vietnam, Cambodia and Haiti during the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1980s, he became an advocate for people with HIV/AIDS and he no longer hid his sexual orientation from others. Because same-sex marriage

was not officially recognized at the time, Rustin and Walter Naegle undertook to solidify their partnership and protect their union legally through adoption: in 1982 Rustin adopted Naegle, 30 years old at the time. Other couples followed suit; and

WHEREAS, in 1986 testimony on behalf of New York State's Gay Rights Bill, Rustin stated that "gay people are the new barometer for social change." He felt that injustice everywhere should not be tolerated and must be protested. He died August 24, 1987, as a result of a perforated appendix; and

WHEREAS, President Ronald Reagan issued a statement on Rustin's death, praising his work for civil rights and "for human rights throughout the world." He added that Rustin "was denounced by former friends, because he never gave up his conviction that minorities in America could and would succeed based on their individual merit"; and

WHEREAS, on August 8, 2013, Rustin was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Barack Obama, the highest civilian award in the United States. The citation in the press release stated: "Bayard Rustin was an unyielding activist for civil rights, dignity, and equality for all. An advisor to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he promoted nonviolent resistance, participated in one of the first Freedom Rides, organized the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and fought tirelessly for marginalized communities at home and abroad. As an openly gay African American, Mr. Rustin stood at the intersection of several of the fights for equal rights"; and

WHEREAS, at the White House ceremony on November 20, 2013, President Obama presented Rustin's award to Walter Naegle, his partner of 10 years at the time of Rustin's death; and

WHEREAS, Rustin's life and legacy live on today on the big screen in the 2023 film Rustin, which was nominated for many awards, including two Golden Globes and an Oscar. Actor Colman Domingo played Bayard Rustin, a role which earned him Golden Globe, British Academy of Film and Television Arts and Academy Award nominations for Best Actor, making him the first openly gay American actor nominated for an Oscar for playing a gay character; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That We, the Members of the One Hundred and Thirty-second Legislature now assembled in the First Regular Session, on behalf of the people we represent, take this opportunity to recognize the life of Bayard Rustin, his fight against injustice and his extensive contributions to the civil rights and equal rights movements.