

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-FIVE

**JOINT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING MAY 2025 AS ASIAN
AMERICAN, NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER
MONTH**

WHEREAS, the Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander community is an inherently diverse population, composed of more than 45 distinct ethnicities and more than 100 language dialects, in addition to different experiences, histories and cultures, including the intersectionality among those who are multiracial, adopted and first generation; and

WHEREAS, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in the United States are an inextricable part of the history of the United States and have made historic contributions to our society and economy; and

WHEREAS, the Transcontinental Railroad was built on the backs of tens of thousands of Chinese migrant workers between the years 1864 and 1869 under perilous working conditions that resulted in a death toll estimated to be in the thousands; and

WHEREAS, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Chester A. Arthur and provided for an absolute 10-year ban on the immigration of Chinese immigrants, which was the first time that the United States restricted immigration to a specific ethnic group; and

WHEREAS, on February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which led to the evacuation and incarceration of approximately 112,000 Japanese Americans into concentration camps, resulting in the permanent loss of property and immense intergenerational trauma still felt by those affected today; and

WHEREAS, the hate crime and murder of Vincent Chin on June 19, 1982, and the subsequent injustice of the court case, over which Justice Charles Kaufman presided, followed by federal charges, marked the first time that the Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander community was protected in a federal civil rights prosecution by resentencing the perpetrators of this heinous act; and

WHEREAS, on March 16, 2021, 8 individuals, 6 of whom were women of Asian descent, were tragically killed in a series of mass shootings at 3 spas in the Atlanta, Georgia area, drawing national attention to the growing violence and discrimination faced by Asian American communities, and highlighting the urgent need for solidarity, justice and meaningful action to combat anti-Asian hate and gender-based violence; and

WHEREAS, in 1893, the United States illegally overthrew Queen Lili'uokalani, the last ruler of the Kingdom of Hawai'i, and in 1898, Congress passed an unconstitutional Joint Resolution annexing the nation, further perpetuating the harm and trauma that the indigenous people of Hawai'i were subjected to as a result of imperialism and colonialism; and

WHEREAS, nationwide, there was a 167% increase in hate crimes against Asians from 2020 to 2021 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and since November 2024, threats of

violence against Asian Americans have skyrocketed, particularly against South Asian Americans; and

WHEREAS, the first Asian communities to settle in the State were Chinese families in the late 1850s; and

WHEREAS, in the 1970s and 1980s, many Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese families immigrated to the State, escaping the upheaval of the Vietnam War and escaping persecution and the Cambodian Genocide conducted by Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge; and

WHEREAS, the number of people who identify as Asian in the State has increased significantly each decade, doubling from 1990 to 2000, increasing by 33% from 2000 to 2009 and increasing by 23.8% for those who identify as Asian alone and by 82.2% for those who identify as multiracial including Asian from 2010 to 2020; and

WHEREAS, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are playing a significant role in the State's labor force and are employed in all sectors of the State's economy, including work in high-tech industries, service industries, the financial sector, government, health care, biomedical research, public schools and higher education, and Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in the State have high civic participation and voter turnout rates; and

WHEREAS, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have made significant contributions to the United States at all levels of the Federal Government and in the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, the month of May was selected to honor Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders because the first Japanese immigrants arrived in the United States on May 7, 1843 and the first transcontinental railroad was completed on May 10, 1869 with substantial contributions from Chinese immigrants; and

WHEREAS, there remains much to be done to ensure that Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have access to resources and a voice in the government of the United States and the State and continue to advance in the political landscape; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That We, the Members of the One Hundred and Thirty-second Legislature now assembled in the First Special Session, on behalf of the people we represent, take this opportunity to recognize May 2025 as Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Month and pay tribute to the contributions of generations of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders who have enriched the history of the State and the United States.