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LRB104 12582 MST 23153 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION 166

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WHEREAS, In the early 20th century, many Arab families began migrating to southwestern Cook County seeking a better life and the opportunity to build a supportive community in the United States; these families have contributed to the rich cultural landscape of Little Palestine, transforming it into a beacon of hope and resilience; and

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WHEREAS, Little Palestine, located in the southwestern region of Cook County, is home to the largest Palestinian community in the nation and the fourth largest Arab American population in the country, spanning a five-mile stretch from 79th and Harlem Avenue in Bridgeview to Harlem Avenue and College Drive in Palos Heights; and

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WHEREAS, Little Palestine features over 200 Arab-owned businesses and community-serving institutions, including a community college, a hospital, three high schools, and more than 20 organizations and institutions; and

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WHEREAS, Historic disinvestment in the Arab American community, coupled with being targeted for discrimination and hate crimes, threatens the sustainability and growth of this area, with over 70% of Arab-owned businesses in Little Palestine having under 10 employees and driving the economy in

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1 this region; and

2 WHEREAS, There has historically been no means to
3 distinguish Arab American populations, economic activity,
4 health, or any other indicators of Arab Americans on data
5 registers at local, state, or national levels; recent efforts
6 to include Arab Americans in data counts, achieved through
7 decades of mobilization within Arab American communities,
8 remain limited and often specific to certain locales; these
9 omissions hinder the ability to document critical issues such
10 as displacement and the impacts of COVID-19 and are an
11 impediment to ensuring that resources can be sought to help
12 revitalize the economic landscape of Little Palestine to
13 ensure sustainable growth and development; and

14 WHEREAS, The Arab American Business and Professional
15 Association, along with a coalition of organizations, is
16 advocating for the official recognition of Little Palestine
17 Day on the 7th day of April each year to help build cultural
18 awareness, increase tourism, and boost economic vitality in
19 this region; and

20 WHEREAS, Recognition of Little Palestine Day will help
21 serve as a celebration of the community's rich heritage,
22 promote solidarity among residents, and encourage support for
23 local businesses and cultural initiatives; and

1 WHEREAS, The heart and soul of the Arab community lies in
2 its people, individuals who embody ambitions, creativity, and
3 aspirations that surpass the ordinary; their contributions
4 continue to reshape the narrative of the area, making it a
5 testament to hope, resilience, and cultural pride; therefore,
6 be it

7 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
8 HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
9 we declare April 7, 2025 and April 7, 2026 as "Little Palestine
10 Day" in the State of Illinois; and be it further

11 RESOLVED, That we invite Illinoisans to celebrate Little
12 Palestine Day by supporting businesses and cultural
13 initiatives in Little Palestine and attending or hosting
14 events showcasing the contributions of the Arab American
15 community to the United States; and be it further

16 RESOLVED, That we invite local schools and educational
17 institutions to incorporate lessons about the history and
18 contributions of the Arab American community into their
19 curricula, promoting inclusivity and understanding; and be it
20 further

21 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be

1 provided to the Arab American Business and Professional
2 Association as a symbol of our respect and esteem.