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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, Pent-up frustrations, including bad policing
3 practices, a flawed justice system, unscrupulous consumer
4 credit practices, poor or inadequate housing, high
5 unemployment, voter suppression, and other culturally embedded
6 forms of racial discrimination boiled over in many poor African
7 American neighborhoods during the mid- to late-1960s, setting
8 off riots that rampaged out of control from block to block;
9 burning, battering and ransacking property and raging crowds
10 created chaos in which some neighborhood residents and law
11 enforcement operatives endured shockingly random injuries or
12 deaths; and

13 WHEREAS, Many Americans blamed the riots on outside
14 agitators or young black men, who represented the largest and
15 most visible group of rioters; however, the Kerner Commission
16 turned those assumptions upside-down in March of 1968,
17 declaring it was white racism, not black anger, that turned the
18 key that unlocked urban American turmoil; and

19 WHEREAS, As a result, The National Advisory Commission on
20 Civil Disorders, known as the Kerner Commission after its
21 chair, then-Governor Otto Kerner Jr. of Illinois, was formed;
22 it was an 11-member Presidential Commission established by
23 President Lyndon B. Johnson in Executive Order 11365 to

1 investigate the causes of the 1967 race riots in the United
2 States and to provide recommendations for the future; and

3 WHEREAS, The Kerner Commission found that poverty and
4 institutional racism were driving inner city violence and
5 proposed aggressive government spending to provide equal
6 opportunities to African Americans; the report was rushed into
7 print by Bantam Books, and the 708-page report became a
8 best-seller, selling 740,000 copies in a few weeks; and

9 WHEREAS, To mark the 30th anniversary of the Kerner Report,
10 the Eisenhower Foundation in 1998 sponsored two complementary
11 reports, The Millennium Breach and Locked in the Poorhouse; The
12 Millennium Breach, coauthored by former senator and commission
13 member Fred R. Harris, found the racial divide had grown in the
14 subsequent years with inner city unemployment at crisis levels;
15 The Millennium Breach found that for most of the decade that
16 followed the Kerner Report, the U.S. made progress on the
17 principal fronts detailed in the report, which were race,
18 poverty, and inner cities; then progress stopped, and in some
19 ways reversed, due to a series of economic shocks and trends
20 and the government's own action and inaction; and

21 WHEREAS, African American poverty remains a critical issue
22 today; in 1969, about one-third of blacks lived below the
23 poverty line; by 2016, that number had dropped to 22 percent as

1 a significant number of African Americans moved into the middle
2 class with a boost from 1960s legislation; however, the
3 percentage of blacks living in poverty is still more than twice
4 as high as the percentage of whites; a lack of opportunity has
5 been shown to increase drug abuse, unemployment, poverty,
6 violence, and other negative factors within a community; and

7 WHEREAS, Blacks now have a louder voice in government, yet
8 poverty and disenfranchisement remain; notwithstanding the
9 Kerner Commission's optimism about potential change, there
10 have been only scattered efforts over the last 50 years to end
11 the United States' racial divide or to address the racial
12 component of poverty in the U.S.; and

13 WHEREAS, Now more than ever, it is obvious that we need to
14 rebuild these economies in urban areas which have been fostered
15 by racial discrimination; to accomplish this, we can replicate
16 a successful rebuilding plan from our country's history; and

17 WHEREAS, In the wake of World War II, Secretary of State
18 George C. Marshall proposed a comprehensive plan to rebuild the
19 economies and spirits of Western Europe in 1947; as part of
20 this plan, the U.S. gave \$13 billion in aid to 16 European
21 nations; this aid included shipping food, staples, fuel, and
22 machinery, rebuilding war-devastated regions, removing trade
23 barriers, and investing in an industrial capacity; and

1 WHEREAS, Due to what became known as the Marshall Plan,
2 European economies experienced unprecedented growth from 1948
3 to 1952, postwar poverty and starvation disappeared, and
4 standards of living increased remarkably; and

5 WHEREAS, Former National Urban League President John
6 Jacobs often spoke of the need for a new domestic Marshall
7 Plan, championing the idea that we could rebuild urban areas in
8 the U.S. the same way we rebuilt entire nations abroad; and

9 WHEREAS, African Americans in the City of Chicago are
10 disproportionately affected by both the violence and the
11 poverty in the city, particularly on the west and south sides;
12 African Americans make up approximately a third of the city's
13 population; despite this, they have consistently accounted for
14 more than 70 percent of homicide victims for decades; due to
15 pre-existing inequalities such as segregation, financial
16 disparities, lack of access to a good education, lost wages,
17 lost homes, lost inheritances, lack of access to testing and
18 treatment, and other issues, the current COVID-19 pandemic has
19 disproportionately hurt African Americans, especially in
20 Chicago; and

21 WHEREAS, Across the nation and in our State, a
22 comprehensive and targeted economic recovery plan is necessary

1 to revitalize and to help elevate the African American
2 population; this new plan must provide federal, state, local
3 tax credits, and other enhancements to encourage businesses to
4 relocate to these struggling communities in order to foster
5 economic vitality; therefore, be it

6 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
7 HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
8 we urge the Illinois General Assembly and the United States
9 Congress to explore a new, domestic investment plan to promote
10 economic growth and recovery in targeted African American
11 communities; and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be sent
13 to Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, Cook County Board President
14 Toni Preckwinkle, all members of the Chicago City Council,
15 Governor JB Pritzker, all members of the Illinois General
16 Assembly, President Donald Trump, U.S. Senate Majority Leader
17 Mitch McConnell, U.S. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer,
18 U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, U.S. House of
19 Representatives Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, and all
20 members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation.