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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 56

Offered January 23, 2026

Designating March 14, in 2026 and in each succeeding year, as Black Midwives Day in Virginia.

Patron—Locke

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, Black midwives fulfill an essential role and contribute to improving maternal health outcomes by addressing disparities and providing culturally congruent care to Black birthing people; and

WHEREAS, the Black Midwives Day campaign was founded in 2023 by the National Black Midwives Alliance to designate March 14 as a day of awareness, education, advocacy, and community engagement to uplift the legacy and ongoing work of Black midwives; and

WHEREAS, the National Black Midwives Alliance will hold its second national convening in the Commonwealth in 2026; and

WHEREAS, Black maternal health in the United States remains in crisis with Black birthing people experiencing significantly higher rates of maternal morbidity and mortality irrespective of income, education, or socioeconomic status; and

WHEREAS, multiple counties in the Commonwealth face a high number of maternity care deserts, where women of childbearing age do not have access to hospitals or birth centers offering maternity care or obstetric providers, which leads to higher rates of maternal morbidity and mortality as most complications occur in the postpartum period when birthing people are far away from their providers; and

WHEREAS, integrating midwives into the maternity care system has been shown to improve birth outcomes, reduce medical interventions, and decrease the racial disparities in maternal and infant health; and

WHEREAS, midwives can assist birthing people and their families with safe and effective childbirth options, and promulgating midwifery promotes access to safe and effective antepartum, intrapartum, and postpartum care; and

WHEREAS, Black midwives have historically provided holistic community centered care yet have been systematically excluded from health care systems through restrictive policies and regulations; and

WHEREAS, the resurgence of Black midwifery is a testament to midwives' resilience and their commitment to reclaiming traditional birthing practices that prioritize respect, autonomy, and positive health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, Black midwives play a pivotal role in reducing maternal and infant mortality, improving perinatal health, and supporting breastfeeding by integrating ancestral wisdom with modern evidence-based practices; and

WHEREAS, it is important to invest in midwifery to expand access to midwifery education and training and to ensure fair compensation and support for midwives; and

WHEREAS, in order to facilitate optimal health care access, midwives should have no restrictions to practicing midwifery to the full extent and scope of their training; and

WHEREAS, in order to promote the restoration of Black midwives to their communities, all educational and certification pathways should be open, available, and funded to build the workforce of midwives; and

WHEREAS, observing Black Midwives Day creates an opportunity to support and recognize the long-standing and invaluable contributions of Black midwives to maternal and infant health in the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly designate March 14, in 2026 and in each succeeding year, as Black Midwives Day in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the Virginia Department of Health so that the agency may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the Senate post the designation of this day on the General Assembly's website.