



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 296-A

Resolution calling on the Governor to sign S.4266A/A.5088A, which establishes a task force on missing women and girls who are Black, Indigenous and people of color.

By Council Members Stevens, Menin, Sanchez, Abreu, Velázquez, Restler, Ung, Nurse, Joseph, Brooks-Powers, Williams, Louis, Brewer, Riley, Ossé, Narcisse, Avilés, Cabán, Farías, Schulman, Krishnan, Gennaro, Gutiérrez, Hudson, Rivera, Hanif and Lee

Whereas, Over 600,000 individuals go missing in the United States every year according to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs), a national information resource center for missing, unidentified, and unclaimed person cases across the United States; and

Whereas, About 40 percent of the 250,000 women and girls listed as missing as of 2020 were people of color, despite making up just 16 percent of the overall population, according to the United States Congress Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties; and

Whereas, According to a 2020 report by the Women's Media Center, there are 64,000-75,000 missing Black women and girls across the United States; and

Whereas, According to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), in 2019, there were 421,394 missing children entered into the data system and of those missing, 298,190 were female and 205,802 were Black females; and

Whereas, According to a 2020 report by the Sovereign Bodies Institute, an Indigenous-led nonprofit research organization, at least 2,306 Indigenous women and girls have gone missing in the last 40 years in the United States, about 1,800 of whom were killed or vanished; and

Whereas, According to the legislative findings of S.4266A/A.5088A, cases involving Black women

and girls often do not receive the attention they need and there are often barriers to families reporting a missing loved one, such as mistrust of police, and racial disparities in how law enforcement treats disappearances; and

Whereas, These structural inequalities have led to the underreporting of the disappearance of women and girls who are Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC); and

Whereas, In 2004, the late PBS news anchor Gwen Ifill coined the term “Missing White Woman Syndrome <<https://n.pr/3ozU0zj>>,” referring to the mainstream media’s seeming fascination with covering missing white women, and the disinterest in cases involving missing people of color; and

Whereas, According to research from Northwestern University, though white women make up about a third of the national population, half of the news articles studied were just about white females; and
Whereas, BIPOC women and girls exist at the intersection of racism and sexism, and often face worse health, wealth, housing, education, and employment outcomes; and

Whereas, According to the Center for Bioethics and Social Justice at Michigan State University, the FBI’s National Crime Information Center, the FBI’s National DNA Index System and the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System do not transfer data to local and state justice agencies and access varies, meaning there is no national unified system for the reporting of missing persons; and

Whereas, The FBI’s Databases include “Asian,” “Black,” “Indian,” “Unknown,” and “White” and there is no category for Hispanic or other ethnicities, nor any subcategories for different Indigenous groups, according to the Center for Bioethics and Social Justice; and

Whereas, In 2021, Minnesota became the first state in the nation to create a Task Force on Missing and Murdered Black Women and Girls; and

Whereas, S.4266A/A.5088A, sponsored by Senator Lea Webb and Assemblymember Karines Reyes, would establish a task force on missing women and girls who are Black, Indigenous and people of color; and

Whereas, Under S.4266A/A.5088A, the taskforce would develop policy changes that would work to address the lack of care and concern for missing and murdered BIPOC women and girls with New York state governmental agencies; and

Whereas, The taskforce would be tasked with advancing the knowledge of communities on the severity of BIPOC women and girls who are missing and murdered and recommending preventive programming and ideas to advance the safety of women and girls; and

Whereas, The taskforce would also ensure BIPOC communities are educated and trained on the prevention, protection, and protocols relating to missing BIPOC women and girls as it relates to social media, as well as develop a strategy to collect statistics, demographics, surveys, oral histories, and data analysis; and

Whereas, S.4266A and A.5088A have passed in the New York State Assembly and New York State Senate, respectively; and

Whereas, As a part of the budget agreement for Fiscal Year 2024, a total of 750,000 dollars has been allocated toward funding the New York State taskforce on missing BIPOC women and girls; and

Whereas, Historical trauma, systemic racism, sexism, racial stereotyping, and sexual objectification of BIPOC women and girls have all contributed to the disparities in missing persons and are often compounded by poverty, homelessness, child welfare involvement, domestic violence, sex trafficking and fear of law enforcement; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the Governor to sign S.4266A/A.5088A, which establishes a task force on missing women and girls who are Black, Indigenous and people of color.

VM/WD

10/27/2023

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