WHEREAS, in the year 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified and formally adopted to the United States Constitution, thus establishing birthright citizenship for nearly four million former slaves and extending full congressional representation to all Americans; and

WHEREAS, the United States Congress then passed the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution on February 26, 1869, which prohibits the denial of voting rights on the basis of race, color or previous condition of servitude; and

WHEREAS, on March 12, 1869, the General Court voted in favor of the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment and the Commonwealth became the ninth state to approve the amendment before its formal adoption on March 30, 1870; and

WHEREAS, the Fifteenth Amendment was the first constitutional amendment to grant voting rights to formerly disenfranchised Americans and thereby set a precedent that, fifty years later, would lead to the adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment granting universal voting rights to American women; and

WHEREAS, the Fifteenth Amendment has served as the foremost defense against systemic voter disenfranchisement and, in this regard, has proven itself to be imperative to the establishment and preservation of the voting rights Act of 1965, which aims to ensure full voting rights for all Americans; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Massachusetts General Court hereby commemorates the One Hundred and Fifteenth Anniversary of the Ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution by the Commonwealth; and be it further

RESOLVED, that a copy of these resolutions be forwarded by the Clerk of the House of Representatives to the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ADOPTED, APRIL 8, 2019.

Robert A. DeLeo
Speaker of the House

Steven J. James
Clerk of the House

SENATE, ADOPTED IN CONCURRENCE, APRIL 8, 2019.

Karen E. Spilka
President of the Senate

Michael J. Hurley
Clerk of the Senate

Offered by:

Representative Carlos Gonzalez

Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz