

Substitute for House Resolution No. 264.

A resolution to commemorate April 12, 2018, as Female African American Landowner's Day in the state of Michigan.

Whereas, Elizabeth Denison Forth became the first African American female landowner in the state of Michigan on April 12, 1825, when she purchased 48.5 acres of land in Pontiac; and

Whereas, Elizabeth (Lisette) Denison was born a slave in 1786 on the estate of William Tucker in Macomb County, the second of six children to Peter and Hannah Denison; and

Whereas, Lisette Denison and her brother escaped to Canada shortly after 1807 and both returned to Detroit around 1812 as free people. Denison then worked for Solomon Sibley as a domestic servant, investing her pay in land, specifically four lots in Pontiac totaling 48.5 acres. The property is currently part of Oak Hill Cemetery, and a State of Michigan historical marker commemorates her ownership; and

Whereas, Lisette married Scipio Forth in 1827 and in 1831 gained employment with Major John Biddle. Throughout this time Mrs. Denison Forth continued to invest, including buying stock in a steamboat, bank, and a lot in Detroit in 1837. By 1854, she had purchased her own home; and

Whereas, When Mrs. Denison Forth died on August 7, 1866, she had willed a portion of her estate to be used for the construction of a church. Her significant contribution, along with supplemental funds from her employer, William S. Biddle, and his brother James, provided for the construction of St. James Episcopal Church on Grosse Ile, with architect Gordon W. Lloyd hired to design the structure. Construction began in 1867 and was completed the following year. The church's red doors are dedicated to Mrs. Lisette Forth's memory and a State of Michigan historical marker commemorates both the church and herself; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That the members of this legislative body commemorate April 12, 2018, as Female African American Landowner's Day in the state of Michigan.