

## CITY OF EASTHAMPTON

In the City Council April 7

WHEREAS, The Treaty of Paris between the U.S. and Spain, signed December 10, 1898 and ratified by Congress in April 11<sup>th</sup> of the same year, ended the Spanish American War and officially ceded Puerto Rico to the United States, and

WHEREAS, On April 12, 1900 the U.S. Congress enacted The Foraker Act (Public Law 56–191) which replaced the temporary military government and established a civilian governing structure led with limited local participation in the island’s affairs, and

WHEREAS, On March 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones Act into law; which, among other things, granted Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship, separated the Executive, Judicial, and Legislative branches of Puerto Rican government, provided limited civil rights to certain individuals, and created a locally elected bicameral legislature, and

WHEREAS, The enactment of the Jones Act also meant that most United States laws went into effect in Puerto Rico, including the National Defense Act of 1916 which established the composition of the U.S. military, and as a result more than 20,000 Puerto Ricans served in the U.S. Armed Forces during World War I; and tens of thousands more have served in every U.S. war and/or conflict ever since, and

WHEREAS, A series of Supreme Court decisions made in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century known as the Insular cases established Puerto Rico is “owned by and not a part of the United States,” and

WHEREAS, The approval of the federal Elective Governor Act by President Harry S Truman in 1947 established that Puerto Rico’s governor had to be elected through a democratic process every four years since 1948, and

WHEREAS, On July 3, 1952, the people of Puerto Rico overwhelmingly approved a constitution that was drafted by the people, which officially established the Commonwealth status of Puerto Rico by popular referendum, and

WHEREAS, As a Commonwealth, all Puerto Ricans are United States citizens and can serve in the United States Armed Forces; however, residents of Puerto Rico do not have voting representation in the United States Congress, and are not entitled to electoral votes for president, and

WHEREAS, As U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans, pay federal taxes such as Social Security and Medicare, but not federal income taxes, and

WHEREAS, Puerto Ricans have since voted in 6 non-binding plebiscites in 1967, 1993, 1998, 2012, 2017 and most recently on November 3rd 2020, and

WHEREAS, The most recent referenda were marred by voting irregularities, confusing ballot language, rejection by United States' Department of Justice (rejected both the 2017 and 2020 referenda), and

Whereas, Aside from being rejected by the United States Department of Justice (USDOJ) the 2017 referendum was also boycotted and 23 percent of registered voters cast ballots in an Island where voter participation often hovers around 80 percent, and

WHEREAS, It is notable that in the November 2020 statehood Yes or No referendum, which was also summarily rejected by USDOJ for excluding all non-statehood options and for other reasons, the results clearly showed that the Island is split almost in half leading to another inconclusive vote, and

WHEREAS, Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Puerto Rican Congresswomen Nydia Velázquez (D-NY) and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) have recently introduced the Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2020 (S. 865/H.R. 2070), a bill that recognizes the inherent authority of the people of Puerto Rico to call for a Constitutional Assembly on Status, and

WHEREAS, S. 865 / H.R. 2070 is based on a bipartisan bill introduced in 2007 by then-Senator Edward Kennedy which had widespread support and would establish a similar process, and

WHEREAS, This piece of legislation puts Puerto Ricans in the driver's seat of their own political future, and would empower Puerto Ricans by recognizing that they are the ones who should democratically decide the process, participate in the deliberations and make the final determination over the political status of the Island, and

WHEREAS, The Pew Research Center estimates that 5.1 million Puerto Ricans reside in the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, and

WHEREAS, That is a substantially greater number than the population of Puerto Rico itself, which was 3.6 million in 2013 and has been in decline for the past few years largely due to out-migration, economic challenges and natural disasters, and

WHEREAS, According to the 2010 United State census 319,042 Puerto Ricans live in **Massachusetts**, the fifth largest **Puerto Rican population** in the United States after New York, Florida, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.  
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WHEREAS, the social, economic and political climate in Puerto Rico has had a direct impact on the many Puerto Rican-American families who call Massachusetts their home, and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Easthampton City Council calls upon Congressman Richard E. Neal to co-sponsor the Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2021 (H.R. 2070), and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Easthampton City Council calls upon and United States Senators Elizabeth Warren and Edward Markey, the Massachusetts Federal delegation, and all of Congress to support the passage of S.865 /H.R. 2070.

*Approved by the Easthampton City Council this 7<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2021.*

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