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TO: COUNCIL MEMBERS

FROM: David Whitaker, Director 
Legislative Policy Division Staff

DATE: April 27, 2022

RE: **RESOLUTION URGING THE DETROIT POLICE DEPARTMENT TO IMPLEMENT COMPREHENSIVE SENSITIVITY TRAINING**

Councilmember Gabriela Santiago-Romero requested that the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) draft a RESOLUTION URGING THE DETROIT POLICE DEPARTMENT TO IMPLEMENT COMPREHENSIVE SENSITIVITY TRAINING.

Attached, please find our draft of the aforementioned resolution.

Attachment

RESOLUTION BY COUNCILMEMBER GABRIELA SANTIAGO-ROMERO

RESOLUTION URGING THE DETROIT POLICE DEPARTMENT TO IMPLEMENT COMPREHENSIVE SENSITIVITY TRAINING

WHEREAS, The mission of the Detroit City Council is to promote the economic, cultural and physical welfare of Detroit's citizens through Charter-mandated legislative functions; and

WHEREAS, The Detroit Police Department and its 2,200 officers are responsible for policing Detroit's 139 square miles. The department's stated mission is to reduce crime and the fear of crime by working with all citizens to preserve life, maintain human rights, protect property, and promote individual responsibility and community commitment; and

WHEREAS, On Friday February 18, 2022, in Detroit's Rouge Park, an Indigenous sugarbush ceremony was held as part of the Detroit Sugarbush Project. "Sugarbush" refers to a group of sugar maple trees growing in the same area used to produce syrup or sugar. The ceremony was the kickoff of the third annual tapping season, led by a coalition of Michigan Tribal communities; and

WHEREAS, A primary point of the project is to engage young Detroiters in the late winter months in an activity that not only get them physically active, but also drives home the important connections between the Indigenous and African-American communities; and

WHEREAS, However, according to news accounts, around 8 pm., after a Michigan State Police helicopter radioed about smoke in the park, over 12 Detroit police officers arrived to shut down the Indigenous sugarbush ceremony; and

WHEREAS, Despite the fact that the participants presented a MOU between the City of Detroit and the participants, in addition to citing the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, which was enacted to return basic civil liberties, and to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religious rights and cultural practices of American Indians, Eskimos, Aleuts, and Native Hawaiians, an officer responded, the sovereign stuff is not valid; and

WHEREAS, The participants in the ceremony, which included several children, under the threat of arrest, were told to leave the park immediately since they were in violation of City ordinances for entering the park after dark. However, as pointed out in news accounts, the Detroit Code of Ordinances chapter 33 states: "All City parks and public places ... shall be closed to the public from **10:00 p.m.** to 6:00 a.m., unless posted signs designate a different period of closure." Although the

work of the Detroit Police Department is difficult and necessary, its officers should receive the appropriate sensitivity training and enforce the laws and ordinances of the City of Detroit appropriately; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, The Detroit City Council, out of concern for the health and welfare of citizens who are vulnerable to cultural bias, is hereby strongly urging the Detroit Police Department to implement a mandatory comprehensive sensitivity training program for its officers, so it may have a better and a more peaceful relationship with all of the diverse communities of Detroit; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED, That the Detroit City Council is also urging that the Detroit Police Department and the General Services Department, create and implement better practices and safeguards when handling cultural ceremonies, to avoid another incident; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED, In addition, the Detroit City Council is urging that the General Services Department work cooperatively with the Sugarbush Project, in order to make the location of the sugarbush ceremony more accessible to the community and its elders; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY**

RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be forwarded to James White, the City of Detroit's Police Chief, and Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan.