

SENATE STATE GOVERNMENT, WAGERING, TOURISM &
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
SENATE, No. 2585

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JULY 22, 2020

The Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism and Historic Preservation Committee reports favorably Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 2585.

This substitute designates the Howell House on Lafayette Street in Cape May, New Jersey the official New Jersey Harriet Tubman Museum.

The Macedonia Baptist Church was organized in 1895 to provide a place for African-American residents of the city of Cape May to practice their faith. The congregation continues to meet today in its historic church building on Lafayette Street, in a neighborhood that was the core of the city's African-American society for much of the 20th century. Next to the church is one of Cape May's oldest houses, the Howell House, given to the church in 1909 by Joseph Howell, which has been used as a parsonage until only a few decades ago. On December 16, 2018, the church signed a lease with developers Robert and Zack Mullock permitting them to renovate the Howell House into a museum honoring Harriet Tubman, which opened virtually on June 19, 2020, a date recognized as "Juneteenth" to commemorate the announcement by Union Army General Gordon Granger of federal orders that enslaved persons in Texas were free.

The museum showcases Harriet Tubman's role as a champion of civil rights and the time she spent in Cape May in the 1850s earning income to support her efforts in the Underground Railroad. Thus, given New Jersey's role in allowing safe passage for many on the Underground Railroad, and the significance of Harriet Tubman's contribution to the freedom of dozens of people, supported by her time in Cape May, and given the historical significance of the Macedonia Baptist Church area to the African-American community, it is appropriate for this State to designate the Howell House on Lafayette Street in Cape May, New Jersey as the official New Jersey Harriet Tubman Museum.

Consistent with current practice, the substitute provides that State or other public funds are not to be used for producing, purchasing, or erecting any signs bearing the designation provided for in the substitute. The substitute authorizes the Governor, or the designee

thereof, to receive financial assistance from non-profit, non-governmental, and private sources to be used for producing, purchasing, or erecting any signs bearing the designation.

Senate Committee Substitute for Senate No. 2585 is identical to Assembly Committee Substitute for Assembly No. 3201.