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3 Councilmember Brandon T. Todd
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Councilmember Brianne K. Nadeau

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10 A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION
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14 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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20 To observe May 13, 2017, as “Remember the St. Louis Day”, a reminder of the tragedy that comes
21 with refusing to welcome refugees and those seeking asylum from war and persecution.
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23 WHEREAS, the United States was founded by immigrants, many fleeing religious
24 persecution, who enshrined freedom of religion as one of our nation’s fundamental legal and
25 ethical principles;
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27 WHEREAS, on May 13, 1939, the German transatlantic liner MS St. Louis, carrying 937
28 passengers, almost all of them Jews fleeing from the Third Reich, sailed from Hamburg,
29 Germany, for Havana, Cuba;
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31 WHEREAS, the majority of the Jewish passengers of the MS St. Louis had applied for
32 US visas and received waiting numbers, and had planned to stay in Cuba only until they could
33 enter the United States;
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35 WHEREAS, when the MS St. Louis arrived in Havana harbor on May 27, the Cuban
36 government admitted 28 passengers and refused to acknowledge them or to allow the remaining
37 passengers to disembark from the ship;
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39 WHEREAS, the State Department and the White House had decided not to take
40 extraordinary measures to permit the refugees from the MS St. Louis to enter the United States,
41 and a State Department telegram sent to the ship’s captain and passenger committee stated that
42 the passengers must “await their turns on the waiting list and qualify for and obtain immigration
43 visas before they may be admissible into the United States;”
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45 WHEREAS, following the United States government’s refusal to permit the passengers to
46 disembark, the MS St. Louis sailed back to Europe on June 6, 1939;

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48 WHEREAS, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee negotiated with 4
49 European governments to secure entry for the passengers, and 532 MS St. Louis passengers were
50 trapped when Germany conquered Western Europe, of which 278 survived the Holocaust and
51 254 died in the Holocaust;

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53 WHEREAS, the Council recognizes this as a dark moment in our nation’s history and an
54 incident from which we should learn a lesson about acceptance and inclusivity when considering
55 our policy about persecuted peoples who seek a home in our nation;

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57 WHEREAS, it is incumbent upon the Council to pursue a policy agenda that is inclusive
58 of refugees seeking asylum in our nation; and

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60 WHEREAS, it is necessary to reaffirm the value of a pluralistic society, the beauty of a
61 city composed of multiple cultures, and the acceptance of those seeking refuge from persecution.

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63 RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this
64 resolution may be cited as the “Remember the St. Louis Day Ceremonial Recognition Resolution
65 of 2017”.

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67 Sec. 2. The Council observes May 13, 2017, as “Remember the St. Louis Day”, a reminder
68 of the tragedy that comes with refusing to welcome refugees and those seeking asylum from war
69 and persecution.

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71 Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon the first date of publication in
72 the District of Columbia Register.