

ARTHUR ELLIS
Legislative District 28
Charles County

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Committee

Joint Committee on Ending Homelessness

Joint Subcommittee on Program
Open Space/Agricultural Land Preservation



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 302
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3616 • 301-858-3616
800-492-7122 Ext. 3616
Arthur.Ellis@senate.state.md.us

February 27, 2020

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 76: Legal – Holiday Maryland Emancipation Day-
Establishment**

Chair Sen Pinsky and members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee,
Chair Sen Guy Guzzone and members of the Budget and Taxation Committee.

This bill establishes Maryland Emancipation Day as a State legal holiday on November 1; Accordingly, it also established as a public school holiday, a bank holiday, and a State employee holiday on November 1.

Maryland calls itself the Free State, but it was is no hurry to give up slavery during the civil war. Everywhere in the country, antislavery measures progressed rapidly. Congress freed the slaves in the District of Columbia in 1862, compensating their owners. The Emancipation Proclamation, which freed the slaves in the states that had seceded, went into effect on Jan.1st 1863. But Maryland didn't act until 1864, when it held a referendum- and even then, the outcome wasn't at all certain.

On Nov. 1, 1864, Maryland's slaves were declared free, only a few months before Congress would approve the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery. Many blacks in Maryland had taken matters into their own hands by that time, either escaping to the District or enlisting in the Union Army, where they served as free men.

Yet even after Maryland's emancipation on Nov.1, 1864 former slaves faced problems. Owners evicted slaves from their homes, or refused to pay wages and apprenticed their children into long term contracts. Some even tried to go after former slaves whom they said owed them money. In an incident recounted in "Freedom" a multi- volume series a sheriff arrested a freed slave in Washington in March 1866- almost two years after Maryland emancipated its slaves- and took him to Maryland. There he was accused of using his former master's horse and cart while attempting to escape with his family in 1863.

Chair Pinsky, Guzzone and committee members, In Our Unites States of America, where freedom is so cherished, Emancipation Day is only celebrated in **FIVE** states (Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Texas, Kentucky, and Washington D.C.).

We were one of the **LAST** states to Emancipate slaves, Let's be one of the **First** to celebrate Emancipation Day on November 1st, by giving SB76 your Favorable Support.

Arthur Ellis

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