

State of Maryland

Commission on Civil Rights

“Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.”



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March 11, 2021

Senate Bill 142 – Legal Holiday - Maryland Emancipation Day - Establishment **POSITION: Support**

Dear Chairperson Pinsky, Vice Chairperson Kagan, and Members of the Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee:

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (“MCCR”; “The Commission”) is the State agency responsible for the enforcement of laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state contracts based upon race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, physical and mental disability, and source of income.

Senate Bill 142 establishes Maryland Emancipation Day as a State legal, public school, bank, and State employee holiday on November 1. Currently, Maryland Emancipation Day has been periodically recognized by local, county, and gubernatorial proclamation.

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights supports SB142 because establishing November 1 as Maryland Emancipation Day would commemorate an important milestone in our State’s history with the adoption of a new constitution on November 1, 1864. This new constitution marked the first time in our nation’s history that a state voluntarily freed its slaves by popular vote. For Marylanders, November 1 marks a unique and special independence day worthy of the same recognition as July 4.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable vote on SB142. Thank you for your time and consideration of the information contained in this letter. The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to improve and promote civil rights in Maryland.