



City of Mount Rainier

1 Municipal Place, Mount Rainier, Maryland 2071 Telephone: (301) 985-6585; Fax (301) 985-6595

March 22, 2022

Re: Support for House Bill 227, Establish Juneteenth National Independence Day as a State Employee Holiday in Maryland.

The Honorable Chairman Paul Pinsky and Members of the Education Housing and Environmental Affairs Committee

As Mayor of the City of Mount Rainier I would like the Committee to know that our City Council is in support of House Bill 227, which would establish Juneteenth National Independence Day as a State legal holiday and a State employee holiday in Maryland.

This bill would follow on the actions of the City of Mount Rainier and several Prince George's County municipalities, as well as the county itself, in recognizing this landmark day for civil rights and equality.

Juneteenth is important because it commemorates a day when the abolition of slavery became a reality for many Americans. Although President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, freedom did not become a reality for many enslaved people for years. Juneteenth commemorates the day when Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston Texas and officially informed residents there that all enslaved people would be free. This occasion started what is now the oldest known celebration commemorating the end of slavery in the United States.

For the Mount Rainier community, it is important this day is recognized. Last year for the first time in our History we raised Juneteenth Flag acknowledging this importance of that day as well as the great contributions our African American Community has given to our city. Juneteenth marks the nation's second Independence Day and should be recognized as a significant milestone in this country's history. We appreciate the opportunity to comment and look forward to your support of this important legislation.

We ask for a favorable vote on HB 227.

We want to thank you for your attention to this matter and your willingness to sponsor this bill. Any questions please feel free to reach out at Council@MountRainierMR.org

Sincerely,

Celina Benitez

Mayor Celina R. Benitez, City of Mount Rainier
On behalf of Mount Rainier Council