

TOWN OF RIVERDALE PARK

March 23, 2022

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Chair, Education, Housing, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support - House Bill 227 - State Government – Legal and Employee Holiday – Juneteenth National Independence Day

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Education, Housing, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

The Town of Riverdale Park strongly support House Bill 227 - State Government – Legal and Employee Holiday – Juneteenth National Independence Day, which would establish Juneteenth National Independence Day as a State legal and employee holiday on June 19th and repeal the requirement that the Governor annually proclaim June 19th as Juneteenth National Freedom Day.

On June 2, 2020, the Mayor and Council adopted Resolution 2020-R-18 establishing a commitment to policies, programs, and initiatives that aim to undo the effects of systemic racism and unequivocally support and defend African Americans and Black people. On October 5, 2020, the Mayor and Council acted to establish Juneteenth as a Town holiday.

Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the emancipation of slavery in Texas and the United States. Juneteenth, a portmanteau word, combines June and nineteenth. Juneteenth originated in Galveston, Texas as a response to General Gordon Granger's pronouncement on June 19, 1865, that "... in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves." Reportedly, the announcement was necessary because many did not know of the Emancipation Proclamation issued in January 1863. The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that abolished slavery was ratified in December 1865. Juneteenth is recognized as a state holiday or special day of remembrance in 43 states and the District of Columbia. Juneteenth needs to be recognized as State legal holiday in the State of Maryland.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important legislation. If you require any additional information, please contact me at jnlestitian@riverdaleparkmd.gov.

Sincerely,

Town of Riverdale Park



John N. Lestitian, Town Manager

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