



March 24, 2022

RE: HB227 Support

To: Chair Pinsky and Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

The Maryland Black Mayors Inc. writes to express our support for 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 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. 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.

Sincerely,

*Johnathan Medlock*

President