



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**HB 227 – State Government – Legal and Employee Holiday –
Juneteenth National Independence Day
House Health and Government Operations Committee
February 1, 2022**

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President
Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 227 – State Government – Legal and Employee Holiday – Juneteenth National Independence Day. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland's 340,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

Juneteenth has been celebrated by African Americans since the end of the Civil War. It marks the anniversary of the last freed slaves in the United States, on June 19th, 1865, in Texas – over two years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed by President Lincoln. Juneteenth is a celebration of emancipation, a reminder to all of us of our shared past, and a time to reflect on the history of our country – both good and bad.

But it was not until 1980, that the first state officially recognized Juneteenth as a holiday, when Al Edwards, an African American state legislator worked to get it passed in Texas. It has been 42 years since that recognition, and Maryland has yet to follow suit. With HB 227 we have the opportunity to enshrine into law, a state holiday in recognition of the end of chattel slavery in our country.

For these reasons we ask for a favorable report on HB 227.