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Legislative District 28  
Charles County

DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER

Finance Committee

Senate Chair

Joint Committee on the  
Management of Public Funds

Chair, Charles, St. Mary's and Calvert  
Counties' Senate Delegation



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Sponsor Written Testimony: Favorable

SB 139: State Government - Legal and Employee Holiday - Maryland Emancipation Day

February 27, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I, Senator Ellis, am proud to introduce Senate Bill 139 entitled, "State Government - Legal and Employee Holiday - Maryland Emancipation Day." Senate Bill 139 designates November 1 as "Maryland Emancipation Day," a state legal holiday and a state employee holiday to commemorate the abolition of slavery in Maryland.

November 1, Maryland Emancipation Day, commemorates the day in 1864 when Maryland abolished slavery.<sup>1</sup> After the Emancipation Proclamation abolished slavery, border states like Maryland voted a year later to comply with this abolition and notify formerly enslaved Marylanders.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, soldiers helped to provide the winning votes to change the constitution in Maryland to abolish slavery.<sup>3</sup> This decision to abolish slavery was a critical

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Hunter, *Local Historian Explains the Significance of Emancipation Day in Maryland*, ABC2WMAR Baltimore (Nov. 1, 2024 7:29 PM), [https://www.wmar2news.com/local/local-historian-explains-the-significance-of-emancipation-day-in-maryland#google\\_vignette](https://www.wmar2news.com/local/local-historian-explains-the-significance-of-emancipation-day-in-maryland#google_vignette).

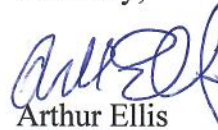
<sup>2</sup> *Maryland Emancipation Day: Its Impact on Southern Maryland*, Southern Maryland Equity in History Coalition, <https://www.equityinhistory.org/article/maryland-emancipation-day-its-impact-on-southern-maryland/> (last visited Feb. 27, 2025).

<sup>3</sup> *Maryland Emancipation Day: Its Impact on Southern Maryland*, Southern Maryland Equity in History Coalition, <https://www.equityinhistory.org/article/maryland-emancipation-day-its-impact-on-southern-maryland/> (last visited Feb. 27, 2025).

turning point in the history of Maryland, and it is critical that residents throughout generations can know and remember this important day. A commemorative day will ensure that the history of this powerful decision by the state of Maryland is not forgotten. November 1 will become an annual holiday that unites the state of Maryland on Maryland's complex history and promising future.

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 139 to designate November 1 as Maryland Emancipation Day. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Arthur Ellis", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Arthur Ellis