



Senator Hearcel F. Craig
15th Senate District

Senate General Government & Agency Review Committee
Senate Bill 334 Sponsor Testimony
Senator Hearcel F. Craig
November 18, 2020

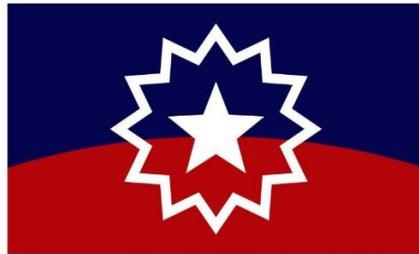
Chair Schuring, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the Senate General Government & Agency Review Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony today on Senate Bill 334. This piece of bipartisan legislation would increase the significance of Juneteenth, which is also known as Emancipation Day, Black Independence Day and Jubilee Day, by making it a state paid holiday. Under this legislation, state employees across Ohio will have June 19 off every year to honor the end of slavery. Like with other legal holidays, government employees will receive their regular rate of pay on this day off. If the holiday falls on a weekend, Juneteenth will be observed on either the Friday before or the Monday after.

On June 19, 1865, Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger arrived with about 2,000 Union Troops in Galveston, Texas, to announce the end of the Civil War and the freedom of the 250,000 Black people who were still enslaved in Texas. This was the official, long overdue end of slavery after the Civil War, even though President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation had legally ended slavery within the Confederacy more than two years prior. The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1865, finally abolished slavery throughout the entire United States.

Soon after the ratification of the 13th Amendment, America entered the Reconstruction Period. After 200 years of slavery, many previously enslaved people urgently started to form families, develop educational establishments and opportunities, campaign for elected offices and even sue their slaveholders for

compensation and restitution. Reconstruction allowed African Americans to start rebuilding our country.

Today, Juneteenth is typically a community celebration, with readings of the Emancipation Proclamation, pageants, concerts and educational and historical activities for children. Many families, friends and communities have cookouts with traditional red foods, such as strawberry soda and red velvet cake. When celebrating Juneteenth, many communities also have a flag-raising ceremony. The flag is red, white and blue with a bursting white star as the symbolic representation of the end of slavery in the United States.



Currently, the City of Columbus and Franklin County observe Juneteenth. In 1980, Texas became the first state to declare Juneteenth a paid state holiday. Juneteenth is recognized as a state holiday or observance in 47 states, including Ohio, and the District of Columbia. A bipartisan movement to make Juneteenth a federal holiday has also gained momentum in Congress. Doing so would highlight how far racial equity has come, and how long the road is ahead for racial justice.

Ohio has a strong history of Black empowerment. By declaring Juneteenth a paid state holiday, we would allow Ohioans to celebrate everyone's independence and reflect on the spirit and hopes of American abolitionists, trailblazers, Reconstruction heroes and Civil Rights activists.

I wanted to take a moment to thank Chairman Schuring and the members of the committee for the opportunity to consider this legislation. I welcome any questions you might have at this time.