



General Government and Agency Review Committee
Proponent Testimony – SB 334
December 1, 2020

Franklin County Board of Commissioners
John O'Grady, President
Marilyn Brown
Kevin Boyce

Chairman Schuring, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee, thank you for the opportunity for the Franklin County Board of Commissioners to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 334. We also thank the bill sponsors, Senators Craig and Brenner, for bringing forward this important proposal to elevate our state's official recognition of Juneteenth to a paid legal holiday for government employees and school districts that choose to participate.

Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day, is a national holiday marking the end of slavery on June 19th, 1865, nearly two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. The day marks the end of a reprehensible part of our history as well as the beginning of a long road of pain, reparation, and healing that we are still walking as a nation. Juneteenth honors the historic significance of that day, acknowledges centuries of enduring injustice, and celebrates Black American freedom and culture. This proposed elevated legal recognition of Juneteenth is an important and lasting way to help us both acknowledge and learn from our history, as well as celebrate our rich diversity, collectively as Ohioans.

This year—a year of many challenges to our individual health, our state's economy, and our collective wellbeing--was also a year of racial reckoning like we have not seen in quite some time. It was one that reminded us in many ways, as we examine our responsibility to ourselves and our children, that we also have a responsibility to one another, to intentionally understand how our shared history shapes our collective future. Our Board is particularly hopeful that if Ohio takes this step, it will inspire a wealth of educational opportunities in both our classrooms and communities in the same way that accompanies our other legal holidays.

In June, our Board of Commissioners approved Juneteenth as an official paid holiday for county employees going forward, and we believe it was one of the more demonstrative actions we have taken to acknowledge history and help educate our community. We are aware that this type of recognition is being considered by communities and companies across the country, and that while 47 states including Ohio recognize it as an official state holiday, few have yet to elevate it to a paid holiday. We urge this body and the General Assembly to embrace this proposal and place Ohio among those leading the nation in giving this day appropriate recognition by giving Ohioans space to reflect, learn, celebrate, and connect.

Thank you for considering this important legislation, and we respectfully ask for your favorable consideration of its passage.