

Senate General Government & Agency Review Committee
Senate Bill 334 Sponsor Testimony
Columbus City Councilmember Emmanuel V. Remy
November 30, 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.

Every year in the City of Columbus, families and congregations in the community come together to celebrate Juneteenth through picnics, music and worship. Some larger celebrations such as the Juneteenth Festival at Mayme Moore Park, Juneteenth Love and Light BBQ at Goodale Park, or Juneteenth at the Boxpark bring hundreds of residents together to remember this history and celebrate the jubilation of freedom received from Major General Gordon Granger on June 18, 1865 in Galveston, Texas. This year COVID-19 forced organizers of some of these annual events to cancel or adjust to become safe and social-distanced, but the celebratory nature remained the same.

This summer Columbus Mayor Andrew J. Ginther proclaimed June 19th as Juneteenth while Columbus City Council declared racism a public health crisis – both actions to recognize the struggle that so many Ohioans and Columbus residents have endured. Declaring Juneteenth a state holiday would further this work in our community, and in other communities who took similar action around the state this year.

I fully support and uplift Senate Bill 334 to declare Juneteenth a state holiday. The declaration of this holiday would serve as a sign of how far racial equality has come and how much more must be done to achieve racial justice and equity.

Thank you to Chairman Schuring and the members of the committee for the opportunity to consider this legislation.



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