

Senate General Government & Agency Review Committee
Senate Bill 334 Proponent Testimony
Elizabeth C. Brown, President Pro Tempore, Columbus City Council
December 1, 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 submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 334 to designate the nineteenth of June as the legal holiday Juneteenth in Ohio.

Black history is American history in Ohio and across the country, and the end of slavery on June 19, 1865 is a date worthy of remembrance, celebration, and reflection—on the history of slavery in the United States, the constant struggle for progress in the intervening decades, and the ongoing fight to achieve racial equity today.

Juneteenth commemorates the arrival of Union soldiers in Galveston, Texas to enforce the emancipation of the last remaining Black men and women who were still held in the bondage of slavery in the United States. Fittingly, the State of Texas became the first state to recognize Juneteenth as a paid state holiday in 1980.

This year, the Commonwealth of Virginia became the latest state to recognize Juneteenth as a paid state holiday. The City of Columbus and Franklin County have also announced plans to recognize Juneteenth as a paid holiday for employees, and there is a movement to recognize Juneteenth as a national holiday.

Similar to the recognition of July 4th as the birth of the United States of America, it is appropriate and fitting that we elevate June 19th as the date when every person in this country was recognized as free. While the work is not done and American history since that time has included repeated and ongoing struggles for racial justice and equity, June 19th is a critical date for our state and nation to mark.

Thank you to Senator Craig and Senator Brenner for jointly sponsoring this legislation, and to all co-sponsors including Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member O'Brien, and Senator Sykes on this committee. I encourage favorable consideration of Senate Bill 334.



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