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State Representative
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House Concurrent Resolution 23 Sponsor Testimony
House State & Local Government Committee
December 7, 2022

Chairman Wiggam, Vice-Chair Johns, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the Ohio House State & Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 23, which urges federal government to designate June 19th as a national holiday. With the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act passed by the United States Congress and signed into law by President Joe Biden in June 2021, my joint sponsor, Representative Juanita Brent, and I wanted to use this time to simply explain why this was so important, by reiterating what was in the intent of the resolution.

“News of the end of slavery did not reach the frontier areas of the United States, in particular the State of Texas and the other southwestern states, until two months after Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox, Virginia, and more than two and one-half years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. On June 19, 1865, Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, arrived in Galveston, Texas, with news that the Civil War had ended and that all the enslaved were free.

African Americans who had been enslaved in the southwest celebrated June 19, commonly known as Juneteenth Independence Day, as inspiration and encouragement for future generations. African Americans from the southwest have continued the tradition of observing Juneteenth Independence Day for more than 150 years. Juneteenth Independence Day began as a holiday in the State of Texas and is now celebrated in 45 states and the District of Columbia as a special day of observance in recognition of the emancipation of all enslaved people in the United States. Countless thousands are assembling and marching through the streets of this nation to shine a light on the racism and the racial inequity that is still present in the United States, and that is subjected daily upon Americans of African descent. The image of the United States as a beacon and symbol of democracy and freedom to the world, wanes under the weight of its unfinished business.”

For these reasons, we brought this resolution to recommend the designation of the 19th day of June as Juneteenth National Freedom Day, and glad it is now a national holiday. Chairman Wiggam, Vice-Chair Johns, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the committee, thank you for your time and we are am happy to answer any questions you have on Juneteenth and its importance.

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