

State of Maryland

Commission on Civil Rights

“Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.”



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March 16, 2021

House Bill 448 – State Government – Legal and Employee Holiday – Juneteenth National Freedom Day POSITION: Support

Dear Chairperson Pendergrass, Vice Chairperson Peña-Melnyk, and Members of the House Health & Government Operations Committee:

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (“MCCR”; “The Commission”) is the State agency responsible for the enforcement of laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state contracts based upon race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, physical and mental disability, and source of income.

House Bill 448 establishes Juneteenth National Freedom Day as a legal and State employee holiday on June 19. Currently, Juneteenth – also known as Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Liberation Day, and Emancipation Day – is recognized throughout Maryland in various ways, such as executive proclamation and local community programming.

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights supports HB448 because June 19 celebrates the emancipation of those who had been enslaved in the United States. Specifically, this day commemorates the anniversary of Union Army General Gordon Granger’s announcement proclaiming freedom from slavery in Texas on June 19, 1865 – two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. For Marylanders, June 19 marks a unique and special independence day worthy of celebration and honor.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable vote on HB448. Thank you for your time and consideration of the information contained in this letter. The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to improve and promote civil rights in Maryland.