



Legislative Testimony
765 Asylum Avenue, 2nd Floor
Hartford, CT 06105
860-523-9146
www.acluct.org

Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 350, An Act Establishing Juneteenth Independence Day as a Legal Holiday

Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, Ranking Members Sampson and Mastrofrancesco, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 350, An Act Establishing Juneteenth Independence Day as a Legal Holiday.

The ACLU-CT is an organization committed to fighting for racial justice in every aspect of our society. One way that racism has persisted in the U.S. is through a denial of U.S. history and an erasure of the history of Black people in the U.S. This shows up, for example, in the holidays we honor as a society. The U.S. celebrates Independence Day on the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence—a significant day in U.S. history, to be sure, but not a day of independence for enslaved people. That day did not come until 1865, after a civil war was fought and the Constitution was amended. Juneteenth is a holiday that celebrates the day when all people in the U.S. gained their legal freedom. It is significant to all of us as a landmark moment in U.S. history.

Recognizing Juneteenth as a legal holiday would make it clear that Connecticut is not eliding its troubled history with slavery. It would also give everyone a cause for celebrating a day when what should be a foundational U.S. ideal—freedom—became more of a reality for formerly enslaved people. Acknowledging that the freedom celebrated on Independence Day was not fully gained until nearly 90 years later is to embrace the work of continuously perfecting our union.

For that reason, Juneteenth is a bedrock American holiday and one that Connecticut should legally recognize. We support Senate Bill 350 and urge the Committee to do the same.