

Chairman Veda, members of the committee, my name is Faith Dixon, I live in Fargo and I am here to testify in favor of SB2232

I just want to give you a brief description of why Juneteenth is so important for People of Color and why I am asking for this bill to pass. The Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in certain states of the Confederacy on January 1, 1863. Then on December 6, 1865, Congress ratified the 13th Amendment which abolished slavery nationwide. Finally, the institution that had kidnapped millions from their homeland, separated families, exposed women and children to sexual assault, made lives disposable, and reduced human beings to property, had been legally eradicated. The end of slavery is a milestone every American should celebrate.

The Emancipation Proclamation, along with the further changes that it precipitated, ranks with the Declaration of Independence and the adoption of the Constitution as documents of foundational importance to the United States. The Proclamation opened the way for further legislation designed to grant black people their civil and human rights such as the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments which officially abolished slavery nationwide, granted citizenship status to black people, and prohibited voter discrimination based on race. Few other legislative acts so profoundly altered the landscape of the country. Juneteenth should be recognized as a national holiday because it is a singular moment in

U.S. history, and it solidifies the reality that black history *is* American history.

Preserving Juneteenth as a national holiday centers people of African descent in a way that puts the black freedom struggle in the middle of the American story. Confederate monuments and icons put white people at the heart of America's history while rendering black people as mere objects or perpetual victims. A Juneteenth national holiday would help American citizens view the Civil War and emancipation from the perspective of those most affected by its outcome black people. Commemorating Juneteenth as a national holiday would both amplify the agency of black people in securing the end of slavery while also motivating present-day activism for securing the full independence and equality of all people.

People have been trying to make Juneteenth a national holiday for years and has not been achieved for many states. Too many people still struggle to break all kinds of gender, racial, ethnic, and economic bonds. The fight for the full equality and freedom of all Americans goes on still. But the time is now and long past for the nation to memorialize Juneteenth as a day that marks liberty as both a reality and an aspiration.

Thank you And I stand for questions: