

March 30, 2021

Hawai'i State Capitol Building
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Committee Members:

This past June 47 states across the country celebrated *Juneteenth*, also known as Freedom Day, which commemorates June 19, 1865 - the end of African American enslavement in the United States. Sadly, Hawai'i was not one of them.

While communities across the island chain independently honor this historic day by participating in marches and rallies, Hawai'i remains just 1 of 3 states that does not designate Juneteenth as a state holiday. We implore the Hawai'i State Legislature to join the rest of the country by passing SB 939, legislation that will finally recognize this monumental day as a *Day of Remembrance*.

Municipalities across Hawaii have already passed resolutions that mark *Juneteenth* as a local day of remembrance, including the City of Honolulu whose city council unanimously passed a resolution to make Juneteenth "*an annual day of honor and reflection*". "*I think it's important that we recognize Juneteenth as a time to reflect on the contributions of the black community in Hawai'i, their unique experiences in our nation, and the ways we can engage with our friends, family, and the broader community to dismantle systemic racism,*" said Honolulu Councilmember Tommy Waters. ([KHON2, 6/18/20](#))

Hawai'i has a proud history of being on the forefront of racial and social justice. As early as 1852 the Kingdom of Hawai'i wrote into law that "*Slavery shall, under no circumstances whatsoever, be tolerated in the Hawaiian Islands; whenever a slave shall enter Hawaiian territory he shall be free, no person who imports a slave or slaves, into the King's dominions shall ever enjoy any civil or political rights.*" Today many of our citizens are direct descendants of former slaves. Rightfully recognizing *Juneteenth* will not only uphold their legacy, but will send a message of solidarity to all of Hawai'i's African-American leaders, tourists, businesses and respected community members. Furthermore, a State calendar date will serve to better educate Hawaii's youth on black history and the importance of equality for all.

As a state that prides itself on diversity and inclusivity, it is long overdue for Hawai'i to fully live out the Aloha spirit in this matter by standing with the 47 states that have chosen to make *Juneteenth* an annual day of remembrance and celebration. We urge you to vote "yes" on HB 1308 and SB 939.

Sincerely,

Elected Officials



Councilmember Marcos Pine
(D-1), City & County of
Honolulu



Councilmember Waters (D-4),
City & County of Honolulu



Councilmember
Anderson (D-3), City &
County of Honolulu



Councilmember Kobayashi (D-
5), City & County of Honolulu



Councilmember Fukunaga (D-
6), City & County of Honolulu



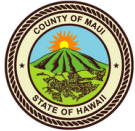
Councilmember Manahan (D-
7), City & County of Honolulu



Councilmember Elefante (D-
8), City & County of Honolulu



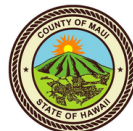
Councilmember Paltin,
County of Maui (West
District)



Council Chair, Alice Lee,
County of Maui



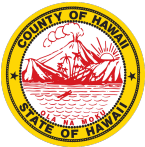
Councilmember King,
County of Maui (South
District)



Councilmember
Hokama, County of
Maui



Councilmember
Poindexter (D-1),
County of Hawaii



Councilmember
Lehualani Kierkiewicz
(D-4), County of Hawaii



Councilmember David
Maile (D-6), County of
Hawaii



Councilmember Cowden,
County of Kauai



Councilmember Kualii'i,
County of Kauai



Councilmember Evslin,
County of Kauai

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Honolulu NAACP



Anti-Defamation League –
Central Pacific Region



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Business Owners on
Hawaii



African Americans
On Maui
Association



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Chi Omega Chapter



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