

January 14, 2021

Dear Representative Rayner,

The Florida Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (FBC-LEO) is appreciative of your leadership in introducing House Bill 185 that establishes an annually celebrated day recognizing America's abolishment of slavery.

Historical documentation shows that Florida's Emancipation Day, May 20, 1865, has been celebrated since Union General Edward M. McCook read President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. General McCook arrived in Tallahassee to receive the surrender of Florida's Confederate troops on May 10th, 1865. On May 20th, McCook announced President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation from the steps of the Knott House, effectively ending slavery in the state. As a result, many Floridians celebrate May 20th as Emancipation Day.

For Florida's African American history to be accurately recorded, we ask you to revise the bill to adopt May 20, 1865 as the official date to celebrate Emancipation Day in Florida.

We appreciate you taking the time to consider our perspective on this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Teresa Watkins-Brown". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a large, stylized 'T' and 'B'.

Teresa Watkins-Brown
President, FBC-LEO
Mayor Pro Tem, City of Fort Myers