

ENCOURAGING EMPLOYERS TO HONOR JUNETEENTH AS A PAID HOLIDAY

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4 WHEREAS, in 2021, Juneteenth became one of only five state-specific federal holidays, joining
5 New Year’s Day, Independence Day, Veteran’s Day and Christmas; and,
6 WHEREAS, Juneteenth honors the quest for freedom in America; and,
7 WHEREAS, Juneteenth is Freedom Day; and,
8 WHEREAS, June 19th falls within Honor America Days; and,
9 WHEREAS, freedom is a hallmark of our democracy, and a rightness to keep and protect; and,
10 WHEREAS, Juneteenth commemorates the end of slavery in America and further celebrates
11 the founding of, fighting for and forging of freedom for all, a virtue of fact, embedded into the
12 Declaration of Independence; and,
13 WHEREAS, slavery was an immoral and inequitable economic and labor engine, which further
14 confined the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and financial well-being of so many; and,
15 WHEREAS, it became apparent that slavery, as an institution in America, directly impeached
16 freedom and the concept found thereof in the Founding Documents; and,
17 WHEREAS, this constitutional contradiction further jeopardized freedom in the Union and its
18 ability to remain a united state; and,
19 WHEREAS, on June 19th, 1862, Congress, under President Lincoln, outlawed slavery in US
20 territories under an “act to secure freedom for all persons with in the Territories of the Unites
21 States;” and,
22 WHEREAS, this act would eventually free people through the Emancipation Proclamations
23 ratified by several enforcements and amendments (13th, 14th, and 15th); and,
24 WHEREAS, instead of being enslaved, sold at will, rented out, used as a price, for debt or for
25 wage, over time many fought for and gained the right to seek protection and protect oneself, to
26 get an education and be educated, to dress oneself, name oneself and be oneself, the right to
27 know, learn and record one’s history and be in and with family; and,
28 WHEREAS, many fought for the freedom of religion, freedom from internment, freedom from
29 Jim Crow, and freedom from disparity; equally many fought for the freedom to travel, to own
30 property, to be in business, and the freedom of at-will employment; and,
31 WHEREAS, so many fought for (and some gained) the freedom to peacefully assemble, to sue,
32 to testify and to redress grievances in court; and,
33 WHEREAS, many sought the right to seek and receive proper personal care and healthcare,
34 and others fought for the right to participate in public, civic and political life; to negotiate freely,
35 the right to work, seek equal pay; serve in the military and even the right to earn citizenship in a
36 country built by their labor; and,

37 WHEREAS, this recognition of freedom, embedded into the Declaration of Independence and
38 manifested in Juneteenth, has lent its weight to a multitude of civil, human, social justice
39 movements; to acts and laws that effectively led to many other collective quests for freedom and
40 equality; to progress ranging from the right to vote to marriage equality and the right to
41 immigrate, migrate, and participate, as a complete and lawful citizen; and,

42 WHEREAS, the Dane County Board of Supervisors recognized that events leading up to and
43 surrounding Juneteenth are connected to the struggle for freedom and other progress which
44 forwards humanity; and,

45 WHEREAS, in regard to workers, this freedom celebrated on Juneteenth allowed people who
46 were in unpaid service as carpenters, drivers, mechanics, educators, healthcare practitioners
47 and many other skilled labor jobs to become bona fide workers and make choices for
48 themselves, about where they labored, what type of work they performed, and under what
49 contracts they were employed; and,

50 WHEREAS, the Juneteenth holiday is an opportunity to recognize the long history of
51 oppression; and,

52 WHEREAS, to date, the historical legacy of slavery continues to hinder progress and negatively
53 impact the lives all people in the Unites States; and,

54 WHEREAS, Opal Lee, the Grandmother of Juneteenth, who was instrumental in bringing
55 Juneteenth forward, has declared, that “nobody is free until we are all free;” and,

56 WHEREAS, in response to why Juneteenth is important for everyone, Lee said that “We
57 celebrate our independence on the 4th of July and freedom on the 19th of June” a statement
58 which underscores the fact that we as a country gained and celebrated our independence on
59 the 4th of July and our never-ending quest and right for freedom in America is now celebrated on
60 the 19th of June ; and,

61 WHEREAS, workers at UW Health and other large employers around the country have
62 proposed that Juneteenth be added to the list of paid holidays; and,

63 WHEREAS, the path to Juneteenth becoming a national holiday was directly influenced by the
64 work and mentorship between Dr. Opal Lee, a Nobel Peace Prize nominated Human Rights
65 Icon, and the late Dr. Ronald Myers, who founded the National Juneteenth Observance
66 Foundation (NJOF); and,

67 WHEREAS, for Dr. Myers, who as a medical doctor and a graduate of the University of
68 Wisconsin School of Medicine & Public Health, advocacy in healthcare was foundational to his
69 advocacy for the recognition of freedom in celebrating Juneteenth; and,

70 WHEREAS, both Dr. Myers and Dr. Lee worked collectively, in community with others, to pass
71 bills in over 40 states before the formal recognition, promise, right and celebration of freedom in
72 Juneteenth was ushered in on a national level when it was signed into law by President Joseph
73 Biden as the eleventh United State federal holiday and;

74 WHEREAS, a growing list of large US companies, such as Target, Nike, Lyft, Apple, Instacart,
75 and Starbucks have recognized Juneteenth as paid time off; and,

76 WHEREAS, as an employer, Dane County recognizes Juneteenth as a paid holiday;

77 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Dane County and the County Board not only
78 recognize the importance of Juneteenth, but also urge all major employers including community-
79 driven healthcare systems and institutions such as UW Health, Meriter, SSM Health, St. Mary's,
80 Oakwood Village, Oak Park and the Bay, to take the lead in honoring Juneteenth as a paid
81 holiday for all of their workers, if this option does not already exist.

82 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Dane County Board of Supervisors further emphasizes
83 the belief that this action not only recognizes Juneteenth's historical connection and importance
84 to Wisconsin but also underscores the critical roles that the major systems, institutions and
85 employers play in supporting and furthering the community's diversity, equity and inclusion
86 efforts and underscores the freedom that wellness provides to all.