



LGBTQIA+ COMMISSION

HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUITY
 9820 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 237 • Columbia, Maryland 21046 • 410-313-6430
 Calvin Ball, County Executive, • Brandee Ganz, Chief Administrative Officer
 LaKeisha McClendon, Administrator

LGBTQIA@howardcountymd.gov

April 4, 2025

Hon. Calvin B. Ball, III, Ed.D., County Executive
 Hon. Elizabeth M. Walsh, Esq., Chair, County Council
 George Howard Building
 3430 Court House Drive
 Ellicott City, MD 21043-4300

RE: Request for Gender-Neutral Language Review in County Charter and County Code

Dear County Executive Ball and County Council Chair Walsh:

On behalf of the Howard County LGBTQIA+ Commission, I am writing to formally request a comprehensive review of gendered language in both the Howard County Charter and the Howard County Code. As part of our commitment to fostering inclusivity and ensuring that county policies and laws reflect the diverse identities of our residents, we urge the County to take steps to update these critical documents with gender-neutral language.

Specifically, we request that the County Charter Review Commission—established by the County Council during its next scheduled review cycle in 2027–2028—prioritize this issue. This review should identify all instances where gender-neutral language should be implemented and provide recommendations for updating the Charter accordingly. Using gender-neutral terminology in government documents is essential to ensuring that all residents feel acknowledged and respected, regardless of gender identity. These changes promote equity, foster inclusivity, and reflect evolving governance standards that align with Howard County's commitment to diversity and equality.

While the Charter review process will take place after your current terms conclude, we ask that the County Executive's office and the current County Council flag this request for your successors and emphasize its importance.

Ideally, future legislation and regulations would incorporate not just gender-neutral language, which removes gendered references, but also gender-inclusive language, which ensures all gender identities are represented and affirmed. The Commission seeks to ensure that existing legal documents use terminology applicable to all individuals without assuming gender. Moving forward, we should strive for the highest level of inclusivity.

Additionally, while Howard County has grown more diverse, inclusive, and equitable since its Charter was adopted nearly 60 years ago, the County Code still contains numerous archaic and inappropriate gendered references. It is essential that the County Code reflects the foundational values of diversity and inclusion embedded in the County's policies, programs, and services. The use of gender-inclusive language will ensure that all residents, employees, and communities are fully recognized in the laws that govern them.

To that end, we request that the Office of Law also undertake a review of the Howard County Code, identifying sections where gendered language should be replaced with gender-neutral alternatives. As the County Code serves as the foundation for governance and law enforcement within Howard County, ensuring that it is written

in an inclusive and accessible manner will further our shared goals of equity and respect for all community members. Any recommendations to modernize gendered language should be considered technical updates, initially proposed as legislation and ultimately approved by the County Council.

We appreciate your consideration of this request for both the County Charter and Code and look forward to discussing the best path forward. If needed, we welcome the opportunity to collaborate with your office to define the scope of work required for implementation. Please let us know how we can assist in advancing this initiative and provide any guidance on the appropriate next steps.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. We look forward to your response and to working together to ensure that Howard County's foundational documents reflect our shared values of inclusivity and respect.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian S. Bailey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brian S. Bailey
Chair, Howard County LGBTQIA+ Commission