

Introduced _____
Public Hearing _____
Council Action _____
Executive Action _____
Effective Date _____

County Council of Howard County, Maryland

2026 Legislative Session

Legislative Day No. 4

Bill No. 20 -2026

Introduced by: The Chairperson at the request of the County Executive

Short Title: Establish – Interfaith Advisory Commission

Title: AN ACT to establish Interfaith Advisory Commission; providing for the membership of the Commission; providing for the purpose and duties of the Commission; providing for the method of appointment and staff; requiring certain meetings and certain reports; providing the expiration dates of the terms of the initial members of the Commission; and generally relating to Interfaith Advisory Commission.

Introduced and read first time _____, 2026. Ordered posted and hearing scheduled.

By order _____
Michelle Harrod, Administrator

Having been posted and notice of time & place of hearing & title of Bill having been published according to Charter, the Bill was read for a second time at a public hearing on _____, 2026.

By order _____
Michelle Harrod, Administrator

This Bill was read the third time on _____, 2026 and Passed ____, Passed with amendments _____, Failed _____.

By order _____
Michelle Harrod, Administrator

Sealed with the County Seal and presented to the County Executive for approval this ___ day of _____, 2026 at ___ a.m./p.m.

By order _____
Michelle Harrod, Administrator

Approved/Vetoed by the County Executive _____, 2026

Calvin Ball, County Executive

NOTE: [[text in brackets]] indicates deletions from existing law; TEXT IN SMALL CAPITALS indicates additions to existing law; ~~Strike-out~~ indicates material deleted by amendment; Underlining indicates material added by amendment

1 **WHEREAS**, on or about January 25, 2024, the County Executive issued Executive Order
2 No. 2024-02 that created the Howard County Interfaith Advisory Council to address issues of
3 religious intolerance and to discuss ways to better coordinate services provided by faith
4 institutions; and

5
6 **WHEREAS**, based on the hard work conducted by the Council and with extensive
7 feedback from County offices and departments, the County Executive issued “Howard County
8 Interfaith Action Plan: Mapping A Bold Partnership Between County Government and the Faith
9 Community” that the Plan reflects the County Executive’s vision to ensure that compassion,
10 justice, and care for our neighbors guide how the County serves the public; and

11
12 **WHEREAS**, the Plan looks at 12 key areas including health and wellness, economic
13 development, education, workforce, environmental stewardship, veterans, older adults, food
14 insecurity, crime and policing, transportation and youth engagement; and

15
16 **WHEREAS**, in addition to the work laid out in the Plan, there is a need for continued work
17 to address issues of intolerance facing communities of different belief systems and to further
18 coordinate services to address the needs of at-risk populations in our County; and

19
20 **WHEREAS**, the County Executive wishes to establish a permanently created Interfaith
21 Advisory Commission to continue this important work; and

22
23 **WHEREAS**, the Interfaith Advisory Commission can provide a powerful platform for
24 education and awareness and advise on best practices for the integration of traditions of differing
25 communities; and

26
27 **WHEREAS**, the Interfaith Advisory Commission will be an invaluable tool to make
28 strides towards reducing religious conflict and promoting peace locally by bridging divides
29 between diverse communities and encouraging dialogue, combatting extremism, and building
30 trust, while enabling collaboration and coordination on shared social issues.

1
2 **NOW, THEREFORE,**

3
4 **Section 1. *Be It Enacted*** by the County Council of Howard County, Maryland, that the Howard
5 County Code is amended as follows:

- 6 1. *By adding Section 6.352 “Interfaith Advisory Commission” to Title 6. County Executive and*
7 *the Executive Branch.*
8 2. *By adding Section 12.222 “Interfaith Advisory Commission” to Title 12, Health and Social*
9 *Services.*

10
11 **Title 6. County Executive and the Executive Branch.**

12 **Subtitle 3. Boards and Commissions.**

13
14 **SECTION 6.352. INTERFAITH ADVISORY COMMISSION.**

15 THERE IS AN INTERFAITH ADVISORY COMMISSION IN HOWARD COUNTY. ITS MEMBERSHIP, DUTIES,
16 AND RESPONSIBILITIES ARE SET FORTH IN SECTION 12.222 “INTERFAITH ADVISORY COMMISSION”
17 OF TITLE 12, “HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES,” OF THIS CODE.

18
19 **Title 12. Health and Social Services.**

20 **Subtitle 2. Human Rights.**

21
22 **SECTION 12.222. INTERFAITH ADVISORY COMMISSION; GENERAL PROVISIONS; PURPOSE;**
23 **MEMBERSHIP; METHOD OF APPOINTMENT; STAFFING; MEETINGS; DUTIES; ANNUAL REPORT.**

24 (A) *GENERAL PROVISIONS.* GENERAL PROVISIONS APPLICABLE TO THE COMMISSION ARE SET FORTH
25 IN SUBTITLE 3, "BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS," OF TITLE 6, “COUNTY EXECUTIVE AND THE
26 EXECUTIVE BRANCH” OF THIS CODE.

27 (B) *PURPOSE.* THE PURPOSE OF THE COMMISSION IS TO PROVIDE ADVICE ON HOW COMMUNITIES OF
28 DIFFERING BELIEF SYSTEMS CAN SERVE AS TRUSTED PARTNERS IN ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS,
29 CONFRONTING HATE AND INTOLERANCE, PROMOTING DIALOGUE, AND STRENGTHENING THE
30 COUNTY’S RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY NEEDS.

1 (C) *NUMBER OF MEMBERS.* THE COMMISSION SHALL CONSIST OF AT LEAST 16 BUT NO MORE THAN
2 20 MEMBERS.

3 (D) *MEMBERSHIP.* THE COMMISSION SHALL BE COMPRISED OF:

4 (1) THE FOLLOWING EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS:

5 (I) THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM OR THE
6 SUPERINTENDENT’S DESIGNEE;

7 (II) THE PRESIDENT OF HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE OR THE PRESIDENT’S DESIGNEE;
8 AND

9 (III) THE PRESIDENT OF THE HOWARD COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM OR THE PRESIDENT’S
10 DESIGNEE.

11 (2) THE FOLLOWING APPOINTED MEMBERS:

12 (I) A MINIMUM OF TEN MEMBERS AND A MAXIMUM OF TWELVE MEMBERS WHO SHALL
13 REPRESENT A DIVERSE VARIETY OF BELIEF SYSTEMS BUT NO MORE THAN 4 MEMBERS
14 MAY COME FROM THE SAME BELIEF COMMUNITY;

15 (II) AT LEAST TWO MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC WHERE CONSIDERATION MAY BE
16 GIVEN TO INDIVIDUALS WHO MAY HAVE “LIVED EXPERIENCES” ADVOCATES THAT MAY
17 INCLUDE INDIVIDUALS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCES TIED TO KEY ISSUES INCLUDING,
18 WITHOUT LIMITATION, HOUSING INSECURITY, DISABILITY, AND IMMIGRATION; AND

19 (III) AT LEAST ONE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE, UNDER THE AGE OF 19, WHO ATTENDS A
20 HIGH SCHOOL OR SECONDARY SCHOOL IN HOWARD COUNTY WHO SHALL SERVE A TERM
21 THAT RUNS FROM JULY 1 THROUGH JUNE 30; AND

22 (E) *METHOD OF APPOINTMENT.* EACH APPOINTED MEMBER SHALL BE APPOINTED BY THE COUNTY
23 EXECUTIVE AND CONFIRMED BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL.

24 (F) *EXECUTIVE SECRETARY AND OTHER STAFF.* THE ADMINISTRATOR OR THE ADMINISTRATOR'S
25 DESIGNEE SHALL SERVE AS THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE COMMISSION AND SHALL ATTEND
26 ALL MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION. THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MAY ALSO DESIGNATE A COUNTY
27 EMPLOYEE TO SERVE AS A LIAISON TO THE COMMISSION.

28 (G) *MEETINGS.* THE COMMISSION SHALL MEET AT LEAST QUARTERLY.

29 (H) *DUTIES.* THE COMMISSION SHALL:

30 (1) *BRIDGE COMMUNITIES AND GOVERNMENT.* ACT AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN COUNTY

1 GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES OF DIFFERENT BELIEFS BY IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES
2 FOR COLLABORATION, COMMUNICATION, AND SHARED PROBLEM-SOLVING ON ISSUES OF
3 PUBLIC CONCERN.

4 (2) *SUPPORT AT-RISK AND UNDERSERVED RESIDENTS.* PROVIDE GUIDANCE ON HOW
5 COMMUNITIES OF DIFFERENT BELIEFS CAN HELP EXPAND ACCESS AND INCREASE
6 ACCESSIBILITY TO COUNTY SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOR RESIDENTS EXPERIENCING
7 VULNERABILITY, INCLUDING, WITHOUT LIMITATION, HOUSING INSTABILITY, FOOD
8 INSECURITY, HEALTH DISPARITIES, DISABILITY, AND ECONOMIC HARDSHIP.

9 (3) *ADVISE ON INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.* RECOMMEND INCLUSIVE, CULTURALLY
10 RESPONSIVE PRACTICES THAT HELP COUNTY AGENCIES AND PUBLIC-SERVING INSTITUTIONS
11 BETTER ENGAGE DIVERSE RELIGIOUS AND BELIEF COMMUNITIES.

12 (4) *PROMOTE VISIBILITY, EDUCATION, AND DIALOGUE.* ENCOURAGE EDUCATION, DIALOGUE,
13 AND PUBLIC AWARENESS THAT CELEBRATE RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY, COUNTER
14 MISINFORMATION AND FEAR, AND STRENGTHEN SOCIAL COHESION ACROSS COMMUNITIES.

15 (I) *ANNUAL REPORT.* ON OR BEFORE FEBRUARY 28 OF EACH YEAR, THE COMMISSION SHALL
16 SUBMIT AN ANNUAL REPORT WHICH SHALL COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 22.1000
17 OF THIS CODE TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL AND THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE ON ITS ACTIVITIES DURING
18 THE PREVIOUS CALENDAR YEAR. THE REPORT MAY INCLUDE RECOMMENDATIONS ON ANY MATTER
19 RELATED TO THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION.

20
21 ***Section 2. And Be It Further Enacted*** by the County Council of Howard County, Maryland that,
22 *to establish the stagger of terms required by § 6.300 of the Howard County Code, of the initial*
23 *appointees to the Interfaith Advisory Commission, at least 5 appointees shall have a term of 1*
24 *year, at least 6 appointees shall have a term of 2 years, and at least 6 appointees shall have a*
25 *term of 3 years, as provided in the Resolutions confirming the appointments.*

26
27 ***Section 3. And Be It Further Enacted*** by the County Council of Howard County, Maryland that
28 *this Act shall become effective 61 days after its enactment.*