



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

3430 Courthouse Drive

Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

410-313-2171

Voice/Relay

Lonnie R. Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer
lrobbins@howardcountymd.gov

FAX 410-313-3051

SUBJECT: Council Testimony – Testimony on CB No. __-2020; a Bill renaming the Office of Human Rights to the Office of Human Rights and Equity

TO: Deb Jung
Council Chairperson

FROM: Lonnie R. Robbins
Chief Administrative Officer

The above referenced Council Bill amends the Howard County Code in order to change the name of the Office of Human Rights to be the Office of Human Rights and Equity. This is not a reorganization pursuant to Section 403 of the Howard County Charter.

The Office of Human Rights (OHR) was established in 1975 by the County Executive and County Council and functions pursuant to the Howard County Code, Section 12.200-12.218. The responsibilities of OHR are to investigate complaints of discrimination, to resolve complaints by conference, conciliation or litigation, and to enforce the Howard County Human Rights Law. In addition, the Office's mission articulates that it serves as a catalyst in fostering and encouraging attitudes and beliefs among County residents which confirm that all individuals have an equal opportunity to enjoy a wholesome and productive quality of life and can pursue their lives free of discrimination.

Enhancing the conversation around diversity, equity and inclusion has been a consistent focus within Howard County government and County Executive Calvin Ball. County Executive's transition report suggested "establishing an Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in the Executive's Office, as well as a DEI Commission to help the DEI Coordinator in the County Executive's office to make recommendations and execute programs." Further, the Office of Human Rights Review Committee's 2019 Report noted that the Office of Human Rights could grow a culture of equity and inclusion through expanded community outreach and engagement throughout our civic bodies and community.

On Monday, August 24, 2020, County Executive Ball announced a new government position, the Equity and Restorative Practices Manager ("Equity Manager"), whose role will identify any practices or policies needed to ensure equity; recommend and implement training and competency-building; develop strategic community partnerships. Through restorative practices, the Equity Manager will help our community in strengthening relationships and building social connections.

In order to effectuate long-term and systemic change, the Equity Manager will be a permanent, merit-based position and based in the Office of Human Rights. The Equity Manager will work to implement best practices and resources in Howard County government and for the general public to promote a culture of equity and inclusion where individuals from all racial and ethnic identities, religions, ages, nationalities, social and economic status, political perspectives, physical and mental abilities, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and personal appearance are able to thrive and have equal

opportunity. Integrating equity work and adding this position aligns appropriately with the functions, powers and duties of the Office of Human Rights.

The Administration remains committed to this goal and integrating equity work within the Office of Human Rights is the integration that further advances the mission of this Office.

Fiscal Impact

The class title for the Equity Manager is a Human Services Specialist III, which is a Grade K position with a salary range of \$62,628.80 - \$113,680.32 annually; however, the position is advertised with a starting salary range of \$62,628 - \$89,670 annual.

cc: Liz Walsh – Council Vice Chairperson
Opel Jones – Councilperson
Christiana Rigby – Councilperson
David Yungmann – Councilperson
Diane Schwartz Jones, Administrator