



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

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Lonnie R. Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer

Voice/Relay

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**To:** Lonnie R. Robbins,  
Chief Administrative Officer

**From:** Yolanda F. Sonnier, Administrator <sup>YFS</sup>  
Office of Human Rights and Equity

**Date:** December 22, 2021

**Subject:** **CB2 Written Testimony regarding adding protections as it relates to citizenship or immigration status in the areas of employment, law enforcement, public accommodations, financing, and housing related to the Howard County Code**

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The Office of Human Rights and Equity (OHRE) has proposed legislation to revise the Howard County Code as it relates to the areas of employment, law enforcement practices, public accommodations, financing, and housing.

The Immigration Subcommittee for the Human Rights Commission performed a comprehensive review of the treatment of immigrants in Howard County, as well as reviewed the Howard County Code as it relates to immigration and citizenship status, researched other Maryland local government's laws pertaining to protections relating to immigration and citizenship status. As part of their review and study, the Commissioners also spoke with a number of community groups and advocates. Based on their findings, it was recommended that the Howard County Code be revised to include language that it is unlawful to discriminate against someone based on their immigration and citizenship status.

The intent of this proposed legislation is to extend protection to all county residents no matter their citizenship or immigration status in all aforementioned areas. OHRE likewise researched comparable laws within Maryland. With the assistance from the Office of Law, this proposed bill would establish an up-to-date Code as it relates to citizenship and immigration status.

This bill would have made the revisions to all five areas investigated by OHRE, but CB85 was amended and passed to include immigration and citizenship in housing and commercial leasing.

The significant revisions of this proposed bill are as follows:

- A preemption clause was added to indicate the provisions of the Human Rights Code shall not apply whenever the provision is preempted by State or Federal Law;
- Citizenship or Immigration status was added to the list in 12.200 II (Public Policy), 12.208I.A (Employment), 12.209I.A (Law Enforcement), 12.210 I.A (Public Accommodations), and 12.211I.A (Financing);
- In 12.207 moved the location of Citizenship or Immigration status to be consistent with the other lists identified in the immediate bullet above; and
- Capitalize the United States Housing Act in 12.207J

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The Office does not anticipate at this time any increase in investigations as a result of these Code changes and does not anticipate any fiscal impact. The Office does anticipate an increase in time for training and outreach to bring awareness and education to the community regarding the new code change and the new protections afforded to all residents.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email, [ysonnier@howardcounty.gov](mailto:ysonnier@howardcounty.gov) or by phone at 410-313-6463.

Thank you for this opportunity to further the protections afforded under the Howard County Human Rights Code.