



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

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Lonnie R. Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer

Voice/Relay

Yolanda F. Sonnier, Administrator, Office of Human Rights & Equity
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Subject: Written Testimony regarding amending the time in which any person may file a complaint claiming to be aggrieved by an alleged unlawful act in violation of provisions related to unfair employment practices of Howard County Code 12-218

To: Lonnie R. Robbins,
Chief Administrative Officer

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

Date: February 23, 2022

The Office of Human Rights and Equity (OHRE) has proposed legislation for revisions to the Howard County Code, Sections 12.218 – regarding Unlawful Employment Practices. The intent of this legislation is to extend protections to county residents in amending the deadline for complainants to file a charge of discrimination with OHRE.

Currently, individuals who have been subjected to employment discrimination have six (6) months from the alleged act of discrimination to file with OHRE to initiate an investigation. This change in the code would allow complainants three hundred (300) days from the alleged act of discrimination to file the complaint with and be investigated by OHRE.

The deadline to file a discrimination complaint with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is Three Hundred (300) days, if also covered by a state or local anti-discrimination laws.

As a Fair Employment Practices Agency (FEPA) with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), OHRE has a work-sharing agreement with EEOC which allows OHRE to investigate cases filed with EEOC that fall under Howard County's jurisdiction. Once the matters are transferred and cross-filed with OHRE, OHRE will be responsible for the conducting the investigation.

OHRE has had to decline investigating employment discrimination cases and refer them to EEOC based on the 6-month filing limitation in Howard County.

By extending the deadline to file in Howard County to 300 days, not only will it assist those filing directly with OHRE, but it will also assist those complainants that filed directly with EEOC by having their matters transferred to OHRE.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office does anticipate an increase in investigations as a result of these Code changes but believes that the increase will be manageable with the current investigative staff. By increasing the time limits for filing, it will increase the cases that can be transferred to OHRE, which will assist in OHRE successfully completing and/or exceeding the contract with EEOC.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email, ysonnier@howardcountymd.gov or by phone at 410-313-6430.