

Testimony of Robert F. Ford, Jr.

Howard County Council

October 17, 2022

Good Evening. My name is Robert Ford, and my pronouns are he/him/his. I reside at 5912 Trotter Rd. Clarksville. I've been a resident of Howard County for 28 years and a member of the LGBTQIA+ community.

I am honored to be considered for a Commissioner on Howard County's newly formed LGBTQIA+ Commission. I thank the County Executive for the nomination and the members of the Howard County Council for the opportunity to testify on my behalf.

I am proud to have served on the County Executive's LGBTQ Workgroup since its inception in 2019 as a representative of the Howard County Human Rights Commission. I view the establishment of this Commission as a natural next step to continue progress for the LGBTQIA+ community in the County.

Having been a Commissioner on the Human Rights Commission for the past 5 years, I have seen firsthand how a collaborative, dedicated body can make a difference in the lives of people who have been targets of discrimination and other forms of bias.

For 4 decades, my personal mission has been to advance the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender members of our society. Since the early 1980's when I worked with the LGBT Community Center of Baltimore to more recently with Howard County PFLAG as well as other LGBTQ and civil rights groups in the County, I have been witness to and have been actively involved in a number of hard-fought victories.

While we have made considerable progress, LGBTQIA+ individuals are still vulnerable to discrimination, hatred and violence, especially young people. Recent rhetoric from those who want to roll back advances to our rights and the desire to censor reading materials for LGBTQIA+ students are examples of concerns.

It is imperative that this Commission be primed to help combat these biases and advise the County government on ways to address these efforts.

Through this Commission, I want to continue to do my part in ensuring our LGBTQIA+ residents are treated with the respect they deserve, no matter who they are, no matter who they identify as, and no matter who they love.

Thank you again for your consideration.