



# Howard County

## Internal Memorandum

**SUBJECT:** Council Testimony, Fiscal Impact Statement & Equity Impact Statement  
Human Rights Code § 12.218 - LGBTQIA+ Commission member qualification  
change

**TO:** Brandee Ganz  
Chief Administrative Officer

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

**DATE:** August 21, 2024

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The LGBTQIA+ Commission (*hereinafter Commission*) was established through Howard County Bill No. 48-2022 and became effective October 1, 2022. This bill was codified in the Howard County Human Rights Code, Section 12.218.

The pre-filed legislation for CB 48-2022 did not require members of the commission to be county residents but through an amendment filed by a County Council member, it required all members of the commission be residents of the County.

The Commission and the Office of Human Rights & Equity recognized that requiring all commissioners and college students to be residents of Howard County restricted and placed a barrier for some people who are committed to and actively engaged in Howard County since they work or attend school in the county. This restriction has prevented the Commission from recruiting those who work or attend school in the county but don't reside in Howard County.

The Commission at their May 9, 2024, meeting, discussed the need for more flexibility when filling vacancies. The Commission made and passed a motion requesting the County Executive propose a change to the County Council specific to the LGBTQIA+ Commission to:

- Allow two commissioners who either live, work, or study at an institute for higher educational in Howard County; and
- Allow the college student commissioner to live, work or study at an institution of higher education in Howard County.

The County Executive supports this change and has put forth the attached legislation accordingly.

**Fiscal Impact:**

There is no fiscal impact to this legislation.

**Equity Impact:**

This change in the Howard County Code will allow the LGBTQIA+ Commission to be more inclusive of community members who may not live in the county but actively contribute by working or attending a higher education institution in Howard County. Since the commissioners are unpaid volunteers, there is no concern that non-county residents are being prioritized over county residents for paid positions. A non-county resident volunteering as a commissioner can make valuable contributions and bring broader perspectives to benefit the Howard County community.