

# State of Maryland

## Commission on Civil Rights

*"Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination."*



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January 27, 2021

### **House Bill 155 – County Boards and Public and Nonpublic Prekindergarten Programs and Schools - Discrimination - Prohibition** **POSITION: Support**

Dear Chairperson Kaiser, Vice Chairperson Washington, and Members of the House Ways & Means Committee:

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (“MCCR”; “The Commission”) is the State agency responsible for the enforcement of laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state contracts based upon race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, physical and mental disability, and source of income.

House Bill 155 prohibits public schools and private schools that receive state funding from discriminating against any student, prospective student, or guardian based on race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability with respect to admission, enrollment, disciplinary action, retaliation, and access to privileges. Under the bill, complaints can be filed with the State Superintendent, who will attempt to mediate a resolution within 60 days. If mediation is not successful within that time period, the State Superintendent shall issue a decision to the complaining party and the institution or local Board of Education. If the institution or Board is found in violation, the State Superintendent may direct the Comptroller to withhold funding for state funded programs. Decisions are appealable to the Office of Administrative Hearings.

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights supports HB155 because students deserve to be free from unlawful discrimination in the classroom. Eradicating unlawful education discrimination will permit all students, including minority students, a fair and equitable chance at receiving the best education possible at a school of their choosing. Additionally, the State of Maryland has declared through prior legislation that discrimination is both unwelcome and unlawful. As such, any institution receiving state funds should be held accountable to these standards.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights strongly urges a favorable vote on HB155. Thank you for your time and consideration of the information contained in this letter. The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to improve and promote civil rights in Maryland.