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MAYOR

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HB0602

February 21, 2024

TO: Members of the House Economic Matters Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: House Bill 602 – Employment Discrimination – Sexual Orientation
POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 602.

This bill is a crucial step towards fostering inclusive and equitable workplaces. It not only prohibits discrimination in wages but also ensures that individuals are not deprived of employment opportunities based on their sexual orientation. The proposed amendments to Article – Labor and Employment Section 3–304 sends a powerful message that Maryland values diversity, equity, and fairness in the workplace.

The definition of "providing less favorable employment opportunities" outlined in the bill is particularly significant. It acknowledges the various ways discrimination can manifest, such as limiting career tracks, withholding information about promotions, or denying employment opportunities based on sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. These protections are essential for creating environments where everyone, regardless of their identity, can thrive and contribute to the best of their abilities.

The provisions in subsection (b) ensure that employers are held accountable for pay disparities and discriminatory practices. By prohibiting wage discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, this bill aligns with the principles of equal pay for equal work, a fundamental tenet of a just society.

Furthermore, the exceptions outlined in subsection (c) strike a balance by allowing for legitimate variations in wages based on factors such as seniority, merit, skills, and business necessity. Importantly, the bill empowers employees to challenge discriminatory practices by demonstrating that exceptions provided by employers are merely pretexts for discrimination.

For those reasons, the Baltimore City Administration **supports** the passage of HB 602.