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MAYOR

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HB1253

March 26, 2025

TO: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 1253 - Department of Social and Economic Mobility - Established

POSITION: Support

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on House Bill (HB) 1253.

HB 1253 creates a new department and special fund under the executive branch of Maryland state government, the Department of Social and Economic Mobility [Special Fund], that houses the Office of Minority Business Enterprises, the Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs, and the Office of Social Equity. The department will serve to advance social equity programs and initiatives in the state including small/disadvantaged business support, cannabis participation by communities impacted by the war on drugs, and other policies as created at the state level. This department will ensure the mission of the aforementioned offices to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion in the state economy is adequately staffed, funded, supported, and positioned to make meaningful impact.

The legislation will aid eligible residents in the state by connecting them to programs that assist in their upward socioeconomic mobility. These programs are administered by the aforementioned offices and will be reviewed and regulated by the department for effectiveness. The establishment of the department should facilitate improved cooperation between the offices to their individual benefit because of their shared general purpose. The special fund will ensure the offices are capable of being fully staffed and carrying out their economic equity programs to the benefit of residents' equity. This renewed commitment to the socio-economic equity of Maryland residents is especially prescient amid efforts to fully defund and divest from all equity initiatives and/or offices throughout the country. The passage of this legislation will signal to Maryland residents who have been historically underrepresented and excluded from the state's economy that Maryland has not abandoned them, their businesses, or their communities.

Due to the reasons stated above, the Baltimore City Administration respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on House Bill 1253.