

HOUSE BILL 878

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CF SB 192

By: **Delegates Taylor, Anderson, Benson, Burns, Conaway, Davis, Glenn, Haynes, Holmes, Howard, Kirk, Manno, Oaks, Rice, Stukes, Tarrant, and Vaughn**

Introduced and read first time: February 9, 2007
Assigned to: Health and Government Operations

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Procurement – Commercial Nondiscrimination Policy – Modifications**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring the staff of the Maryland Commission on Human
4 Relations to review certain complaints and make certain determinations;
5 altering the responsibilities of the Commission and Commission staff; requiring
6 the Commission to protect certain confidential information; altering the
7 standard for certain findings made by Commission staff; altering the procedures
8 to obtain a contested case hearing; requiring certain parties in a contested case
9 hearing to provide notice on all other parties; providing the Commission with
10 the discretion to designate the venue for a contested case hearing; authorizing
11 an administrative law judge to affirm or reject all or part of a statement of
12 charges; altering the scope of evidence that an administrative law judge may
13 consider in a contested case hearing; requiring all false or frivolous allegations
14 to be knowingly false or frivolous; authorizing the Commission to adopt certain
15 regulations; altering certain terms; defining certain terms; making technical
16 changes; making stylistic changes; and generally relating to the Maryland
17 Commission on Human Relations and the Commercial Nondiscrimination
18 Policy.

19 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
20 Article – State Finance and Procurement
21 Section 19–103, 19–106 through 19–110, 19–116, and 19–119
22 Annotated Code of Maryland
23 (2006 Replacement Volume and 2006 Supplement)

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
2 MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

3 **Article – State Finance and Procurement**

4 19–103.

5 (a) In this title the following words have the meanings indicated.

6 (b) “Administrative law judge” means the individual assigned by the Office of
7 Administrative Hearings to conduct a hearing under this title.

8 (c) (1) “Business entity” means any person, **AS DEFINED IN § 1–101(D)**
9 **OF THIS ARTICLE**, firm, sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, limited liability
10 company, or other business entity or a combination of any of these entities, including
11 any financial institution, developer, consultant, prime contractor, subcontractor,
12 supplier, or vendor, that has submitted a bid or proposal for, has been selected to
13 engage in, or is engaged in providing goods or services to the State.

14 (2) “Business entity” does not include another governmental entity
15 that is subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

16 (d) “Commercial customer” means a business entity that procured or
17 attempted to procure goods or services from a business entity for business as opposed
18 to personal, family, or household use.

19 (e) “Commercial Nondiscrimination Policy” means the provisions contained
20 under this title and any regulations or documentation requirements adopted by the
21 Maryland [Human Relations] Commission [for the Office of Minority Affairs] **ON**
22 **HUMAN RELATIONS** in accordance with this title.

23 (F) (1) **“COMMERCIAL TREATMENT” MEANS THE TREATMENT OF A**
24 **VENDOR, SUPPLIER, SUBCONTRACTOR, OR COMMERCIAL CUSTOMER BY A**
25 **BUSINESS ENTITY THAT AFFECTS THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS AND THE TERMS**
26 **AND CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH BUSINESS IS TRANSACTED BETWEEN TWO OR**
27 **MORE BUSINESS ENTITIES.**

28 (2) **“COMMERCIAL TREATMENT” DOES NOT MEAN TREATMENT**
29 **THAT IS UNRELATED TO A BUSINESS TRANSACTION OR THE CONDUCT OF**
30 **BUSINESS.**

1 [(f)] (G) “Commission” means the Maryland [Human Relations]
2 Commission **ON HUMAN RELATIONS**.

3 (H) “**COMMISSION STAFF**” MEANS EMPLOYEES OF THE MARYLAND
4 **COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS DESIGNATED BY THE COMMISSION TO**
5 **PROCESS, INVESTIGATE, AND PURSUE COMPLAINTS FILED UNDER THIS TITLE.**

6 [(g)] (I) “Contract” means an agreement with a business entity that is let
7 by or on behalf of the State for that business entity to sell or lease supplies or goods, or
8 to provide construction, real estate development, financial, insurance, professional, or
9 other services to the State in return for a fee or any other form of compensation to be
10 paid or provided by the State.

11 [(h)] (J) (1) “Discrimination” means any disadvantage, difference,
12 distinction, or preference in the solicitation, selection, hiring, or commercial treatment
13 of a vendor, supplier, subcontractor, or commercial customer on the basis of race, color,
14 religion, ancestry or national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, or on
15 the basis of disability or any otherwise unlawful use of characteristics regarding the
16 vendor’s, supplier’s, or commercial customer’s employees or owners.

17 (2) “Discrimination” does not include lawful efforts to remedy the
18 effects of discrimination that have occurred or are occurring in the marketplace.

19 [(i)] (K) “Economic development project” means a real estate development,
20 construction, or renovation project for which the State provides:

21 (1) funding or other financial assistance, other than payments in
22 exchange for goods or services;

23 (2) land;

24 (3) road improvements;

25 (4) tax credits; or

26 (5) a below market purchase price.

27 [(j)] (L) (1) “Financial institution” means a person:

28 (i) engaged in the business of lending money, guaranteeing
29 loans, extending credit, securing bonds, or providing venture or equity capital; or

1 (ii) that offers financial services in connection with State
2 projects or the administration of State government.

3 (2) "Financial institution" includes banks, savings and loans, venture
4 capital companies, insurance companies, bonding companies, mortgage companies,
5 credit unions, and brokers.

6 [(k) "Office" means the Office of the Executive Director of the Maryland
7 Human Relations Commission or the Executive Director's designee.]

8 [(l) (M) "Party" means:

9 (1) the person who has filed a complaint under this title;

10 (2) the respondent business entity that has been alleged to have
11 violated this title; and

12 (3) the [office] **COMMISSION** that is responsible for investigating the
13 complaint and rendering the initial findings.

14 [(m) (N) "Retaliate" means to take any action that has a material negative
15 effect against any person, business or other entity for reporting any incident of
16 discrimination, testifying as a witness at a hearing, or providing requested assistance
17 to [the Office] **COMMISSION STAFF** in any investigation of an incident of
18 discrimination under this title.

19 [(n) (O) "Services" includes construction, real estate development,
20 financial, insurance, professional, and other services.

21 [(o) (P) "State subcontract" means an agreement for the provision of goods
22 or the performance of a particular portion of work to be performed under a contract
23 with the State, where:

24 (1) the party providing the goods or services is on reasonable notice
25 that the work is to be performed under a State contract; and

26 (2) the amount to be paid for such [service] **GOODS AND SERVICES** is
27 material with respect to the overall amount of the contract.

28 [(p) (Q) "State subcontractor" means the party providing goods or services
29 under a State subcontract.

1 19-106.

2 (a) Any person may file an administrative complaint with the Commission
3 within the limitations period set forth in § 19-101(c) of this title stating facts showing
4 or tending to show that a business entity has within the preceding 4-year period
5 engaged in discrimination or retaliation [against that person] in violation of this title.

6 (b) Within 10 business days, the Commission shall notify the business entity
7 against whom the complaint was filed that a complaint has been received.

8 (c) **BEFORE THE COMMENCEMENT OF AN INVESTIGATION OF AN**
9 **ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINT, COMMISSION STAFF SHALL REVIEW THE**
10 **COMPLAINT TO DETERMINE WHETHER:**

11 (1) **MEDIATION WOULD BE APPROPRIATE; AND**

12 (2) **BOTH PARTIES SHOULD BE CONTACTED TO ATTEMPT SUCH**
13 **MEDIATION IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH THE REGULATIONS ADOPTED**
14 **UNDER THIS TITLE.**

15 19-107.

16 (a) [The Office] **COMMISSION STAFF** shall be responsible for [investigating]
17 **DIRECTING AND CONDUCTING INVESTIGATIONS OF** discrimination and retaliation
18 complaints filed under this title **IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH ARTICLE 49B § 3,**
19 **§ 10, AND § 11.**

20 (b) The [Office] **COMMISSION** may request [that the Commission provide]
21 **ASSIGNMENT OF** additional State personnel or outside consultants as may be
22 reasonably necessary or appropriate to conduct an investigation.

23 (c) (1) [The Office] **COMMISSION STAFF** shall exercise reasonable
24 judgment in seeking relevant evidence from the complainant, the respondent business
25 entity and, as necessary, external sources.

26 (2) This title may not be construed to require the State to fund the cost
27 of:

28 (i) having State staff or other individuals travel outside the
29 State to investigate any claim under this title; or

1 (ii) having witnesses travel to the State for the purpose of
2 investigating a claim or testifying at a hearing or proceeding under this title.

3 (d) (1) Consistent with **ARTICLE 49B, § 13 OF THE CODE**, the Public
4 Information Act, and the Open Meetings Act, the [Office] **COMMISSION SHALL**
5 **PROTECT THE CONFIDENTIAL CHARACTER OF INFORMATION RELATING TO AN**
6 **INVESTIGATION AND** may issue protective orders for good cause to limit, or otherwise
7 impose conditions on, access by any person to any document in the possession of a
8 party.

9 (2) A protective order issued under paragraph (1) of this subsection
10 may include:

11 (i) a document in the possession of the State or otherwise in the
12 record that is not a public record; and

13 (ii) information disclosed in accordance with § 19–116 of this
14 subtitle.

15 (e) The [Office] **COMMISSION** shall exercise reasonable discretion in
16 determining the extent of the investigation required to support [the Commission's]
17 **COMMISSION STAFF'S** initial findings and recommendations.

18 (f) (1) The [Office] **COMMISSION** may investigate and adjudicate a claim
19 of discrimination under this title only if the claim alleges that:

20 (i) the discrimination was committed by a business entity
21 within the limitations period set forth in § 19–101(c) of this title; and

22 (ii) the discrimination occurred in the State.

23 (2) Discrimination is deemed to have occurred in the State only if:

24 (i) each party operated a place of business in, or resided in, the
25 State at the time of the discrimination; or

26 (ii) the discriminatory act was committed in the State.

27 19–108.

28 (a) In determining whether to proceed further with an investigation and in
29 making findings, [the Office] **COMMISSION STAFF** may consider any evidence

1 provided by the complainant or the respondent business entity as to the following
2 factors:

3 (1) whether there was an intent to discriminate on the part of the
4 respondent business firm;

5 (2) whether there was a pattern and practice of discrimination on the
6 part of the respondent business entity;

7 (3) any actions taken by the respondent business entity to remedy the
8 alleged discrimination;

9 (4) the effectiveness of any prior attempts by the respondent business
10 entity to remedy the discrimination;

11 (5) whether the respondent business entity has procured goods or
12 services from or otherwise engaged in business with persons or entities of the same
13 protected class as the complainant to an extent sufficient to demonstrate that the
14 respondent business entity has not discriminated against such protected class in the
15 overall context of its business; and

16 (6) any other evidence deemed relevant by the Commission.

17 (b) Based on [the Office's] A review and investigation [,the Office]
18 **CONSISTENT WITH ARTICLE 49B, § 10 OF THE CODE, COMMISSION STAFF** shall
19 make an initial finding of each allegation stated in the complaint, that either:

20 (1) the investigation produced sufficient evidence to find that the
21 alleged discrimination or retaliation did take place (“[sustained] **PROBABLE CAUSE**”);

22 (2) the investigation failed to produce sufficient evidence to find that
23 the alleged discrimination or retaliation took place (“[not sustained] **NO PROBABLE**
24 **CAUSE**”);

25 (3) the investigation produced sufficient evidence to establish that the
26 complainant knowingly made one or more false or frivolous allegations, and further
27 investigation did not appear likely to produce sufficient evidence that the alleged
28 discrimination or retaliation did take place (“false or frivolous”);

29 (4) the allegation has been settled or otherwise resolved with the
30 agreement of the respondent business entity, the complainant, and the State
31 (“settled”); or

1 (5) the allegation has been withdrawn (“withdrawn”).

2 (c) [The Office] **COMMISSION STAFF** shall make the initial findings under
3 subsection (b) of this section based on a preponderance of the evidence.

4 (d) On completion of its initial investigation, [the Office] **COMMISSION**
5 **STAFF** shall recommend to the Commission the appropriate action to be taken,
6 including:

7 (1) additional investigation of the complaint;

8 (2) the Commission’s adoption of the initial findings rendered by [the
9 Office] **COMMISSION STAFF**;

10 (3) imposition of sanctions;

11 (4) imposition of remedies; or

12 (5) other action consistent with this title.

13 (e) In determining appropriate action on a discrimination claim, the
14 Commission may take into account any evidence provided or uncovered in the course
15 of the investigation regarding:

16 (1) the impact of the discrimination on affected parties;

17 (2) the impact of any authorized remedy on the State or any other
18 party;

19 (3) actions taken by the respondent business entity to remedy the
20 alleged discrimination;

21 (4) the effectiveness of any prior attempts by the respondent business
22 entity to remedy the discrimination;

23 (5) whether the respondent business entity has procured goods or
24 services from or otherwise engaged in business with persons or entities of the same
25 protected class as the complainant to an extent sufficient to demonstrate that the
26 respondent business entity has not discriminated against such protected class in the
27 overall context of its business;

1 (6) the number and scope of prior violations of this policy by the
2 respondent business entity; and

3 (7) any other evidence determined to be relevant by the Commission.

4 (f) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, the
5 Commission shall make the initial findings and issue recommendations for
6 appropriate action within 120 calendar days of the receipt of the complaint.

7 (2) The Commission may[:

8 (i)] extend the time limit set forth in paragraph (1) of this
9 subsection for:

10 (I) good cause; or

11 (II) if the parties agree to mediate a settlement to the
12 complaint[]; and

13 (ii) if mediation is unsuccessful, refer the matter to the Office of
14 Administrative Hearings].

15 (g) The Commission shall notify the complainant and the business entity
16 within 5 business days of the issuance of the initial findings and recommendations,
17 including an explanation of the reasons justifying the initial findings.

18 19–109.

19 (a) [If the Commission determines that] **A REQUEST FOR A CONTESTED**
20 **CASE HEARING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROCEDURES SPECIFIED IN THIS**
21 **SECTION MAY BE MADE BY:**

22 (1) **A BUSINESS ENTITY, UPON A COMMISSION DETERMINATION**
23 **OF PROBABLE CAUSE FOR** one or more **OF THE** allegations **STATED IN THE**
24 **COMPLAINT AGAINST THE BUSINESS ENTITY, AND FAILURE OF TIMELY**
25 **CONCILIATION; OR**

26 (2) [are sustained or that] a complainant [has submitted] **ON A**
27 **COMMISSION DETERMINATION THAT THE COMPLAINANT HAS FILED** a knowingly
28 false or frivolous complaint[, the business entity against whom the allegations were
29 made or the complainant who is claimed to have submitted a knowingly false or

1 frivolous complaint shall be entitled to request a contested case hearing in accordance
2 with the procedures specified in this section].

3 (b) (1) To submit a matter to an administrative hearing as a contested
4 case under this title, the business entity or the complainant must request a contested
5 case hearing by filing a written notice with the Commission [and the complainant]
6 within 15 calendar days of notice of the initial findings and recommendations.

7 (2) The notice must contain the following information:

8 (i) a demand that the matter be referred to the Office of
9 Administrative Hearings for a contested case hearing in accordance with §
10 10–205(c)(2) of the State Government Article;

11 (ii) the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the
12 Commission, the business entity’s representatives, and [the other party] **ANY OTHER**
13 **PARTIES**;

14 (iii) a reference to this title; and

15 (iv) a summary of the Commission’s findings and
16 recommendations that are being submitted for resolution to the administrative law
17 judge for the contested case hearing.

18 **(3) THE REQUESTING PARTY SHALL IMMEDIATELY SERVE NOTICE**
19 **OF THE REQUEST FOR A CONTESTED CASE HEARING UPON ALL OTHER PARTIES.**

20 (c) If the business entity fails to properly request a contested case hearing,
21 the initial findings and recommendations of the Commission shall become the final
22 administrative decision of the State, and the Commission shall then be authorized to
23 enter any order and to take any action reasonably necessary or convenient to:

24 (1) implement remedies under § 19–110 of this title;

25 (2) impose sanctions under § 19–111 of this title; and

26 (3) govern the conduct of the parties in the manner described under §
27 19–112 of this title so that the purposes of this title are achieved.

28 (d) (1) (i) For each contested case hearing properly requested by the
29 business entity or by the complainant, the Commission shall [delegate the matter to]
30 **FILE A STATEMENT OF CHARGES WITH** the Office of Administrative Hearings [to

1 assign] **AND REQUEST A HEARING BEFORE** an administrative law judge [to conduct
2 a hearing] in a manner consistent with the requirements of this subsection.

3 (ii) **THE COMMISSION MAY DESIGNATE THE VENUE FOR**
4 **THE CONTESTED CASE HEARING, TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THE**
5 **CONVENIENCE OF THE PARTIES AND THE LOCATION OF THE EVIDENCE.**

6 (iii) At the contested case hearing, the Commission shall have
7 the burden of proof by a preponderance of the evidence.

8 (2) The Office of Administrative Hearings shall conduct any contested
9 case hearing in accordance with its rules of procedure under COMAR 28.02.01.

10 (3) (i) At the conclusion of the contested case hearing, the
11 administrative law judge shall issue a written decision.

12 (ii) The administrative law judge's written decision may:

13 1. affirm or reject [the initial findings and
14 recommendations] **ALL OR PART OF THE STATEMENT OF CHARGES; OR**

15 2. substitute different findings [or] **AND** recommend
16 appropriate remedies[; or

17 3. continue the hearing and return the case to the
18 Commission for further investigation and findings and to report to the administrative
19 law judge on the results of the investigation within the time frame the administrative
20 law judge may specify].

21 (4) The administrative law judge's written decision shall be solely
22 based on a preponderance of the evidence contained in the record of the contested case
23 hearing and shall reflect the evidentiary basis for its findings.

24 (5) **AN ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE MAY CONSIDER ANY**
25 **EVIDENCE REGARDING THE FACTORS DESCRIBED IN § 19-108(A) OF THIS TITLE**
26 **WHEN DETERMINING WHETHER TO SUSTAIN AN ALLEGATION PRESENTED IN A**
27 **STATEMENT OF CHARGES.**

28 (e) Notwithstanding any contrary provision in this title, unless the
29 administrative law judge finds that one or more allegations giving rise to the
30 Commission's findings or the business entity's challenge to the findings were frivolous

1 or knowingly false when made, each party shall bear the cost of its own legal
2 representation and expert witness fees.

3 (f) If the administrative law judge finds that one or more allegations giving
4 rise to the Commission's findings or the business entity's challenge to the findings was
5 frivolous or knowingly false when made, the administrative law judge may require the
6 party who made the frivolous or knowingly false allegations to bear all or a portion of
7 the other party's legal fees and expert witness fees.

8 (g) The business entity, the Commission, and the complainant shall
9 cooperate in good faith to have the contested case hearing concluded within 180 days
10 after the business entity issues its notice for a contested case hearing.

11 (h) If the Commission determines that one or more allegations are
12 **KNOWINGLY** false or frivolous, the complainant making the allegations shall be
13 entitled to a contested case hearing on the allegations that are determined to be
14 **KNOWINGLY** false or frivolous in accordance with the procedures set forth in this
15 section, except that all references to the business entity with respect to matters of
16 contested case hearing rules and procedure shall apply to the complainant.

17 (i) If the complainant fails to properly request a contested case hearing
18 regarding a determination of a **KNOWINGLY** false or frivolous allegation as provided in
19 this title, the initial findings and recommendations shall become the final
20 administrative decision of the State in accordance with § 19–112 of this title.

21 (j) (1) If a timely contested case hearing is not requested, the Commission
22 may vacate the [Office's] **COMMISSION STAFF'S** recommended remedy on written
23 notice to all parties within 5 business days after the time for requesting a contested
24 case hearing has expired.

25 (2) In the absence of notice, the Commission shall be deemed to have
26 approved the [Office's] **COMMISSION STAFF'S** recommended remedy.

27 (k) [If the Commission vacates the Office's proposed remedy, the Commission
28 shall initiate a contested case hearing by filing a request for a contested case hearing
29 with the Office of Administrative Hearings in compliance with the requirements of
30 this title.

31 (l) To the extent that procedures and standards stated in this title differ
32 from those contained in Title 10, Subtitle 2 of the State Government Article, this title
33 shall govern but in all other respects, the provisions of the State Government Article
34 shall govern.

1 19–110.

2 (a) When an allegation is sustained by an administrative law judge under
3 this title, the administrative law judge may take additional evidence on the
4 appropriate remedy to be recommended, including evidence relating to factors set
5 forth in [§ 19–108(f)] § **19–108(E)** of this subtitle and any other evidence deemed
6 relevant by the administrative law judge.

7 (b) If the administrative law judge sustains an allegation, the administrative
8 law judge may order any one or more of the following actions:

9 (1) any remedy that is agreed to by the respondent business entity, the
10 complainant, and the Commission;

11 (2) referral of the respondent business entity to the Board of Public
12 Works for a determination of debarment pursuant to §§ 16–306 and 16–307 of this
13 article to preclude the business entity from:

14 (i) bidding on or receiving contract awards on State projects;
15 and

16 (ii) participating in State contracts as a subcontractor, vendor,
17 or supplier for a period of not more than 3 years;

18 (3) rescission, suspension, or termination of any current contract
19 between the respondent business entity and the State under the terms of that
20 contract;

21 (4) exercise of any other rights or remedies available to the State
22 under any current contract between the respondent business entity and the State;

23 (5) finding that the respondent business entity is not a “responsible
24 bidder” within the meaning of this article with respect to specific contracts that the
25 State has put out for bids or intends to put out for bids;

26 (6) referral of the matter for criminal prosecution of fraud and other
27 violations under State law if appropriate under the circumstances; or

28 (7) mediation.

29 19–116.

1 Every contract that the State enters into shall include the following language:

2 “As a condition of entering into this agreement, upon the [Maryland Human
3 Relations Commission’s] request **OF THE MARYLAND COMMISSION ON HUMAN**
4 **RELATIONS**, and only after the filing of a complaint against the company under Title
5 19 of the State Finance and Procurement Article, as amended from time to time, the
6 company agrees to: provide to the State within 60 days after the request a truthful and
7 complete list of the names of all subcontractors, vendors, and suppliers that the
8 company has used in the past 4 years on any of its contracts that were undertaken
9 within the State of Maryland, including the total dollar amount paid by the contractor
10 on each subcontract or supply contract. The company further agrees to cooperate in
11 any investigation conducted by the State pursuant to the State’s Commercial
12 Nondiscrimination Policy as set forth under Title 19 of the State Finance and
13 Procurement Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, to provide any documents
14 relevant to any investigation that is requested by the State. The company understands
15 and agrees that violation of this clause shall be considered a material breach of this
16 agreement and may result in contract termination, disqualification by the State from
17 participating in State contracts, and other sanctions.”.

18 19–119.

19 (a) [The] **IN ACCORDANCE WITH TITLE 10 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT**
20 **ARTICLE, THE** Commission shall [recommend] **ADOPT** regulations [as may be
21 required from time to time] to implement this title.

22 (b) The Commission may establish documentation and reporting
23 requirements to further the purposes and intent of this title.

24 **SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED**, That this Act shall take effect
25 October 1, 2007.