

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
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FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 471 (Senator Nathan-Pulliam, *et al.*)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Morgan State University - Task Force on Reconciliation and Equity

This bill requires Morgan State University (MSU) to convene a task force to explore issues of reconciliation processes and racial equity that includes specified stakeholders. By December 31, 2017, MSU must submit a preliminary report on the activities of the task force to the Governor and the General Assembly; by June 1, 2018, MSU must submit a final report on the activities, findings, and recommendations of the task force.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2017, and terminates May 31, 2019.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for MSU are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources. It is also anticipated that State agencies can use existing budgeted resources to consult with and provide requested information to the task force.

Local Effect: Local governments can use existing resources if asked to consult with the task force.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The commission consists of one member each from the Senate and the House of Delegates, as well as representatives from other designated entities. The task force must consult with the following State agencies: (1) the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights; (2) the Division of Civil Rights of the Office of the Attorney General; (3) the

Department of Human Resources; (4) the Department of Housing and Community Development; (5) the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation; (6) the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; (7) the Department of Transportation; and (8) the Maryland State Department of Education. The task force may consult with other units of State or local government, as appropriate. On request of the task force, a unit of State government must provide information or staff support in a timely manner or designate a representative to serve as a member of the task force or attend a meeting or hearing of the task force.

To the extent practicable, the members of the task force must have expertise in reconciliation processes and racial equity issues and reflect the geographic, racial, ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity of the State. MSU must select a chair from among the members of the task force. A member of the task force may not receive compensation but is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard State travel regulations, as provided in the State budget.

The purpose of the task force is to foster reconciliation and achieve racial equity by (1) increasing awareness through public discussions about the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of racial inequities; (2) involving individuals and public and private entities, including majority and minority groups, in every sector throughout the State in a collective process; (3) fostering racial equity through recognition, understanding, adjustment, compromise, and forgiveness; and (4) recommending strategies, changes, and actions in institutions, policies, and laws to eliminate systemic racism and promote equity, opportunity, healing, and harmony.

The task force must:

- hold hearings at various locations throughout the State; receive testimony from individuals, State and local agencies, community-based organizations, and other public and private organizations; and invite representatives from interested stakeholder groups to testify at the hearings;
- study (1) the nature of race relations, racial disparities, gender differences in the experience of racial inequities, and institutional bias throughout the State; (2) manifestations of prejudice, changes in race relations, hate crimes, and racial injustice; (3) the impact of persistent racial disparities and institutional bias on individuals and communities, as specified; (4) past and ongoing efforts to promote human rights and social justice; and (5) best practices throughout the United States regarding policies, laws, and systems designed to eliminate racial and gender inequities and foster reconciliation between various groups;

- identify the criteria to be used in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the strategies and changes in institutions, policies, and laws recommended by the task force;
- make recommendations regarding strategies, changes, and actions in State institutions, policies, and laws to improve race relations, eliminate racial and gender inequities, and support reconciliation, including specified measures; and
- monitor and evaluate the implementation of the recommended strategies and changes in State institutions, policies, and laws using the criteria developed by the task force.

A person, including an employer, may not retaliate against an individual for giving testimony at a hearing held by the task force.

Current Law: The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights, one of the entities required to consult with the task force to be convened pursuant to the bill, is an independent State agency that seeks to protect against discrimination based on race, color, religion or creed, sex, age, ancestry or national origin, marital status, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Its mission is to (1) ensure opportunity for all through the enforcement of Maryland’s laws against discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and State contracts; (2) provide educational outreach services; and (3) promote and improve civil rights in Maryland.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: SB 869 of 2016, a similar bill, passed the Senate as amended and was heard in the House Economic Matters Committee, but no further action was taken.

Cross File: HB 1519 (Delegate Lewis) - Appropriations.

Information Source(s): Maryland Commission on Civil Rights; Department of Housing and Community Development; Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation; Maryland Department of Transportation; Kent, Montgomery, and Worcester counties; City of Westminster; towns of Bel Air and Leonardtown; Department of Legislative Services

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