

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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February 9, 2021

House Bill 197 – Criminal Procedure – Police Officers – Stop Procedures (Know Your Rights Act) POSITION: Support

Dear Chairperson Clippinger, Vice Chairperson Atterbeary, and Members of the House Judiciary 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 197 requires law enforcement officers during a traffic stop to provide their identification, their name, their badge number, the name of the agency they work for, and the reason for the stop. They are also required to inform individuals of their right to refuse to speak or provide information to the officer, to be informed of the justification for the stop, and to terminate the interaction. Officers are further required to notify occupants in the vehicle who are not the driver of their right to refuse to provide identification. Officers are prohibited from seizing personal items from an individual and using coercive tactics or deliberately misrepresent facts in order to obtain information.

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights supports HB197 because we believe that all individuals benefit from being aware of their rights under law, including when interacting with law enforcement officers during routine traffic stops. Similar to the Miranda warning that officers provide when placing an individual in custody, HB197 seeks to ensure that Marylanders are informed of reasonable information about the officer, the purpose of the stop, and their rights.

Because of this, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable vote on HB197. 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.