

# 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 2, 2021

### **Senate Bill 5 – Public Health – Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities POSITION: Support**

Dear Chairperson Kelley, Vice Chairperson Feldman, and Members of the Senate Finance 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.

Senate Bill 5 requires the Office of Minority Health & Health Disparities to identify and approve implicit bias training programs for licensed health professionals, who must attest that they have completed such training when applying for or renewing a license or certificate to practice medicine in the State of Maryland. The bill includes mandated funding and reporting provisions, while authorizing the Office to seek supplemental grant funding from federal and special fund sources.

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights supports SB5 given the correlation between the measures this bill seeks to codify and those outlined in §19-355 of the Health General Article, which prohibits a hospital or related institution from discriminating against any individual with respect to medical care because of their protected class. Despite Maryland’s success in expanding access to health care for all over the past decade, much work remains to be done in order to achieve health care parity, especially for minority groups and other marginalized groups. MCCR believes that SB5 will provide vital education to our licensed health care professionals, thereby moving Maryland closer to realizing our collective vision of a health care system that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination. MCCR believes that SB5 will be an important tool in educating our licensed health professionals in the hope of achieving a health care system in Maryland that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.

Headlines were made in December, 2020, when Dr. Susan Moore of Indiana complained on a series of social media posts of being subjected to discriminatory behavior by doctors while she was hospitalized for COVID-19. On December 4, Dr. Moore stated, “I put forth and maintain, if

I was white, I wouldn't have to go through that... This is how Black people get killed, when you send them home, and they don't know how to fight for themselves." She was discharged from Indiana University Health System on December 7, only to again be hospitalized 12 hours later at Ascension St. Vincent. While she said she was receiving better care at Ascension, Dr. Moore died soon thereafter on December 20. Dr. Moore's story is not unique to Indiana, and Maryland is not immune from similar instances. We must remain steadfast and proactive in our efforts to prevent each and every Marylander from being victims of unlawful discrimination in any form.

For these reasons, MCCR urges a favorable vote on SB5. 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.