

# 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 17, 2021

## **House Bill 529 – St. Mary’s County Human Relations Commission – Equal Treatment POSITION: Support**

Dear Chairperson Pendergrass, Vice Chairperson Peña-Melnyk, and Members of the House Health & Government Operations 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 529 deletes from the St. Mary’s County Human Relations Commission enabling statute the list of protected classes. In doing this, their mandates is to “encourage and ensure equal treatment of all people in compliance with federal, State, and local laws and regulations related to housing, employment, and public accommodations.”

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights supports HB529 because it ensures that whenever Title 20 of the State Government Article is amended to include new protected classes, the St. Mary’s County Human Relations Commission is automatically charged with encouraging and ensuring equal treatment without needing to amend their law to mirror Title 20. For example, Chapters 116 & 117 of the 2020 Acts of the General Assembly added “source of income” as a protected class under Maryland’s fair housing law. However, the St. Mary’s County Commission statute was not amended by these Chapters. HB529 eliminates that need for additional legislation.

For this reason, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable vote on HB529. 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.