

January 26, 2021
Testimony on HB 62
Department of Small Business, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation – Established
Health and Government Operations

Position: Favorable

On behalf of the Young Democrats of Maryland Caucus of Color, I would like to thank Delegate Lewis for introducing this bill. I would also like to thank the Health and Government Operations Committee for welcoming our commentary regarding how this bill will support young people of color in the State of Maryland.

As an organization that serves to promote the political involvement and well-being of young people of color in Maryland, we are aware that the prioritization of small businesses, and more specifically those owned by women and minorities, is vital in the support of our economy. With this in mind, we fully support HB 62. This bill would centralize authority on the economic impact of proposed legislation by creating the Department of Small Business, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation and establishing it as a principal department in the Executive Branch. By transferring authorities and offices from bodies such as the Governor's Office of Small, Minority, and Women Businesses Affairs, the Department of Commerce, and the Department of Labor to the new Department of Small Business, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation, the Executive Branch will be able to efficiently and accurately evaluate the impact of certain actions on the well-being of Maryland's small-business economy, as well as the level of procurement of small, minority, and women-owned businesses among contracts issued by Maryland State agencies.

As identity and opportunity have historically walked hand-in-hand, the fair representation of small, women, and minority-owned businesses in government-issued contracts and in consideration for legislative action has become increasingly important in recent years. As agencies and legislators act to provide opportunity across our state, they must consider the position of the "little guys" as they do so. This fact is increasingly important as our economy works to recover from the slowdown necessitated by the spread of the novel coronavirus. The state, though it will, without a doubt, work tirelessly to support the struggling economy, must prioritize the support of small businesses and businesses owned by women and minorities. Not only are these businesses the backbone of Maryland's economy—they are an active and crucial element in the creation of a new economic landscape. HB 62 ensures that these businesses are provided ample opportunity across the board by designating the Department of Small Business, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation as a hub for analysis of economic policy and agency-issued contracts.

This bill also ensures that the Interdepartmental Advisory Committee on Small Business, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation, will engage in activities ensuring the promotion of employment of minority persons and the promotion of the growth and participation of minority business enterprises in Maryland. In addition, HB 62 gives the Department the ability to conduct research around problems concerning black males in the areas of unemployment, criminal justice, education, and health. Giving the Department the authority to actively engage with legislative bodies, agencies, and internal research allows Maryland's Executive Branch to remain proactive in rectifying societal problems perpetuated by racial disparities. In passing this

legislation, we will create the infrastructure necessary for all businesses and peoples to thrive as the economy builds itself back up.

We urge a favorable report.