

RON WATSON, PH.D  
*Legislative District 23*  
Prince George's County

Judicial Proceedings Committee



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 121  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
301-858-3631 · 410-841-3631  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3631  
Fax 301-858-3174 · 410-841-3174  
Ron.Watson@senate.state.md.us

## *The Senate of Maryland*

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 10, 2022

### **To Chair Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and my colleagues in the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:**

Thank you for the opportunity to present this bill today.

SB 555 is a bill that requires the business and health occupations board to include information on the gender, race, county of practice, type of disciplinary action imposed, length of disciplinary period, and amount of fine imposed in any annual report on disciplinary activity issued by the board.

This bill seeks to gather gender, race, and location data regarding disciplinary actions taken by various occupation boards in an effort to ensure that equitable punishments are handed down by these boards. In order to prevent bias or discrimination in disciplinary actions, we must ensure egalitarian practices. SB 555 is a positive first step toward this goal. Currently, The Commission on Judicial Disabilities collects information on gender and race during the judicial application process. This data is obtained only for statistical purposes, but is not currently maintained and is considered confidential.

The question that this dilemma poses is “How can we track potential cases of racial and gender-based biases and discrimination, if the data is not recorded, stored, and readily available?” The health and business occupation boards combined regulate over half a million individuals and businesses in the state. Any individual licensed in these occupations may be subject to a range of disciplinary actions by their respective boards. The basis for disciplinary actions also varies by occupation. This bill also seeks to have the Commission on Judicial Disabilities aggregate the demographic data of the licensed workers that have been disciplined, and submit the disciplinary activities report to the Governor and the General Assembly every year. This provides the opportunity to analyze this data for inequity, and act appropriately on any potential disparities that are found in the analysis. Colleagues, I would just like to emphasize that we cannot tackle the issue of discrimination and bias if there is no data to study in an effort to provide an evidence-based solution. SB 555 will start the process.

**For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report for SB 555.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ron L. Watson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "R" and "W".

Senator Ron Watson

Legislative District 23