

Date: March 9, 2023

Bill number: HB 805

Committee: House Appropriations Committee

Bill title: **Department of Human Services – Office of African American Affairs**

DHS Position: **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide written support and recommendation for amendment to House Bill 805 (HB 805). DHS thanks Delegate Wells for her collaboration and consideration of proposed amendments and welcomes continued collaboration.

House Bill 805 would establish the Office of African American Affairs within DHS. The stated purpose of the Office would be to study the status of African Americans in Maryland and work with named and unnamed organizations to develop a strategic plan on addressing all forms of discrimination, including systemic and structural discrimination.

DHS believes the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives is the more appropriate placement for the Office of African American Affairs. The Governor's Office of Community Initiatives connects Marylanders to economic, volunteer, and human service opportunities through government, business, and nonprofit partners and conducts community affairs and engagement within the executive branch of Maryland government. Given the expressed intention and goals of the Office of African American Affairs DHS recommends that HB805 be amended to place the Office of African American Affairs within the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives. Additionally, the mandated appropriation of \$250,000 to be included in the Governor's budget to employ two staff members should be included in the budget for the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives.

The Department supports House Bill 805 if amendments are included in the Committee's report as recommended above. The Department is grateful to offer our support and collaboration on HB 805 and requests a favorable with amendments report.

