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**TO:** The Honorable Ben Barnes  
Chair, Appropriations Committee

**FROM:** Rhea L. Harris  
Deputy Chief, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

**RE:** House Bill 517 -State Personnel - Whistleblower Law - Procedures and Remedies (First Amendment and Public Employee Protection Act) – Letter of Information

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The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) is respectfully providing the following information in reference to House Bill 517- State Personnel – Whistleblower Law- Procedures and Remedies (First Amendment and Public Employee Protection Act).

House Bill 517 alters the prohibition on reprisal against an employee who discloses information that the employee reasonably believes to be evidence and actions under the Maryland Whistleblower Law in the Executive Branch of State government. The bill also (1) requires the OAG to investigate unresolved complaints within a 60-day period and (2) authorizes the award of certain monetary damages and reasonable attorney's fees and costs in prevailing cases.

House Bill 517 would alter current Whistleblower law by tasking the OAG with determining whether a certain violation has occurred in unresolved complaints as opposed to the Secretary of Budget and Management. The Attorney General is the chief legal officer of the State. The OAG has general charge, supervision and direction of the legal business of the State, acting

as legal advisors and representatives of the major agencies, various boards, commissions, officials and institutions of State Government. This professional responsibility to our agency clients would significantly undermine OAG's ability to provide the investigation and enforcement of our agency clients that House Bill 517 requires.

We respectfully request that you consider this letter of information when deliberating House Bill 517.

cc: Delegate Heather Bagnall  
Appropriations Committee Members