

**CANDACE McLAREN LANHAM**  
*Chief Deputy Attorney General*

**CAROLYN A. QUATTROCKI**  
*Deputy Attorney General*

**LEONARD J. HOWIE III**  
*Deputy Attorney General*

**CHRISTIAN E. BARRERA**  
*Chief Operating Officer*

**ZENITA WICKHAM HURLEY**  
*Chief, Equity, Policy, and Engagement*

**PETER V. BERNS**  
*General Counsel*



**WILLIAM D. GRUHN**  
*Chief*  
Consumer Protection Division

**ANTHONY G. BROWN**  
*Attorney General*

**STATE OF MARYLAND**  
**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**  
**CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION**

Writer's Direct Dial No.  
(410) 576-6307

February 27, 2024

**TO:** The Honorable C.T. Wilson, Chair  
Economic Matters Committee

**FROM:** Steven M. Sakamoto-Wengel  
Consumer Protection Counsel for Regulation, Legislation and Policy

**RE:** House Bill 996 – Consumer Protection – Consumer Council – Name  
Change and Other Modifications (SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT)

---

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General (the “Division”) supports House Bill 996, sponsored by Delegate White Holland, and offers an amendment to the bill. House Bill 996 would change the name of the Consumer Council of Maryland to the Consumer Protection Commission.

The Consumer Council is an advisory body to the Consumer Protection Division, established by statute fifty years ago, with nine members appointed by the Governor, with 3 representing businesses, 3 representing consumers, and 3 representing the public. The Chief of the Division is an *ex officio* member. Among other things, the Council studies issues facing Maryland consumers and can issue reports and recommendations regarding those issues. The Council members also serve as liaisons between the Division and the sectors and organizations they represent and are encouraged to give talks about the Division and consumer protection to organizations and community groups.

The members of the Council determined that they can better perform those functions if the body’s name is changed to the Consumer Protection Commission. In particular, the addition of “Protection” to the name might provide greater clarity to the role of the advisory body and facilitate the body’s liaison functions.

The Division, however, has concerns about the provision to provide members with a Per Diem payment. Members are currently reimbursed for expenses incurred in connection with the Council, such as mileage and parking. However, the Division’s budget does not include any

funding that would be available to pay members a Per Diem payment and we do not anticipate that any such funding would be included in the foreseeable future. The members of the Council have acted in a volunteer capacity since the advisory body's inception and a change in that status would require diversion of funds that otherwise would go toward providing services to consumers. We have spoken with Delegate White Holland and understand that she is willing to offer a sponsor amendment removing the Per Diem provision.

Accordingly, the Consumer Protection Division requests that the Economic Matters Committee give HB 996 a favorable report with the requested amendment.

cc: Members, Economic Matters Committee  
The Honorable Jennifer White Holland  
Stephanie Baker, Chair, Consumer Council