



SB666 Human Relations - Discrimination by a Place of Public Accommodation
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 20, 2024

Letter of Information

Background: Numerous versions of this legislation have been filed since 2011. In 2020, we came to an agreement with the Human Rights Commission and the sponsors on compromise language that is reflected in the amendments the Sponsor will provide to the committee.

Comments: The Maryland Retailers Alliance (MRA) stands firmly against discrimination. Over the years, many example scenarios have been discussed that this bill could be applicable to, from a business providing too few handicap parking spots, to an outright discriminatory verbal comment or scenario. Ultimately, the investigatory process that the Human Rights Commission will share has very rarely found instances in which fines are imposed. **This is because the majority of employers take action immediately to ensure customer problems are addressed properly, and typically fire employees over discriminatory events.** For these reasons we have argued against exposing an employer to private right of action, and for decreasing the fines proposed in the bill as introduced.

Our organization as well as other business groups have worked for years on this policy, and we urge the Committee to adopt the amendments which reflect the work that has been done to identify an approach that works for all stakeholders. Should the proposed amendments be accepted, MRA would remain in a neutral posture on the bill. Thank you for your consideration.