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Appropriations Committee
120 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Thursday, February 20, 2025

HB1253 – Maryland Department of Social Equity - Established

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Esteemed Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Ronnie L. Taylor, and I serve as the Advocacy, Policy, & Partnerships Director at FreeState Justice, a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing legal and systemic inequities affecting Maryland's LGBTQIA+ community. I am here to testify in strong support of **HB1253**, which seeks to establish the Maryland Department of Social Equity.

HB1253 addresses the critical need for a centralized body to oversee and promote social equity across Maryland. Marginalized communities, including LGBTQIA+ individuals, often face systemic discrimination and barriers to accessing essential services. By creating the Maryland Department of Social Equity, this bill aims to ensure that all residents, regardless of their background or identity, have equitable access to state resources and opportunities.

The establishment of the Maryland Department of Social Equity is a significant step toward institutionalizing fairness and justice in our state's policies and programs. Key provisions of **HB1253** include:

1. **Centralized Oversight:** The Department will serve as the principal entity responsible for coordinating social equity initiatives across various state agencies, ensuring consistency and effectiveness in addressing disparities.
2. **Support for State Units:** By providing assistance to other state units, the Department will facilitate information sharing, policy analysis, and the adoption of standards that promote social equity. This collaborative approach is essential for creating an inclusive environment for all Marylanders.
3. **Successor to Existing Offices:** The Department will integrate and build upon the work of existing offices, such as the Governor's Office

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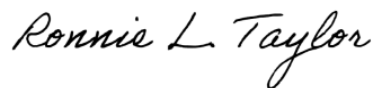
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of Small, Minority, and Women–Owned Business Affairs, the Office of Social Equity in the Maryland Cannabis Administration, and the Office of Minority Business Enterprises in the Maryland Department of Transportation. This consolidation will streamline efforts and resources dedicated to social equity.

For the LGBTQIA+ community, the Department's role is particularly vital. Studies have shown that LGBTQIA+ individuals often face higher levels of psychological distress due to systemic discrimination. A centralized body focused on social equity can implement targeted interventions to address these disparities and improve mental health outcomes.

In closing, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report for **HB1253**. This legislation not only addresses critical gaps in our state's approach to social equity but also reinforces Maryland's commitment to justice and inclusion for all its residents

Best,



Ronnie L. Taylor

Sources:

1. [Organizational Change Strategies to Support High-Quality Behavioral Health Care for LGBTQ Individuals - PMC](#)