



# State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

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## **House Bill 502 – Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy and Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative – Established Position: Support**

Dear Chairperson Barnes, Vice Chairperson Chang, and Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (“MCCR”; “The Commission”) is the State agency responsible for enforcing Maryland’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, state contracts, commercial leasing, and health services based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, physical and mental disability, source of income, and military status.

House Bill 502 is an important bill aimed at creating opportunities for individuals with disabilities seeking employment in State government. The bill establishes within the Department of Disabilities (“MDOD”) the Office of Disability Employment Advancement & Policy (“Office”). The bill also creates the Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative which will be implemented and overseen by the Office.

As Maryland’s lead agency on civil and human rights, MCCR reports annually on complaints received alleging unlawful employment discrimination based on disability. Historically, disability shares a spot alongside race, retaliation, and harassment, as the top protected classes and issues identified within our complaints. Specifically, disability was identified 601 times in FY2022, 627 times in FY2023, and 531 times in FY2024.

HB502 will have a meaningful impact in Maryland leading by example. While creating opportunities and eliminating barriers for employment within State government is a win for our professionals dedicated to serving the public, it will also have a profound impact on creating similar equities, opportunities, and access within the private sector.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable vote on HB502. Thank you for your time and consideration of the information contained in this letter. MCCR looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to promote and improve fair housing and civil rights in Maryland.

*“Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.”*

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