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February 21, 2025

TO: The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair
Appropriations Committee

FROM: Tiffany Johnson Clark, Chief
Legislative Affairs Unit

RE: House Bill 1253 – Maryland Department of Social Equity – Established
(FAVORABLE)

The Office of the Attorney General supports House Bill 1253 (“HB 1253”) – Maryland Department of Social Equity – Established sponsored by Speaker Adrienne Jones. HB 1253 would establish the Maryland Department of Social Equity, which, among other responsibilities, would assist individuals in Maryland by connecting them to appropriate social equity programs and resources, advise State agencies on issues of social equity, develop innovative social equity-related recommendations, policies, practices, and programs for the State, and conduct analyses of the effectiveness of various social-equity programs.

Maryland is currently the most diverse state on the East Coast, and home to three of the nation’s most diverse cities.¹ Because this diversity is one of Maryland’s greatest assets—one that should be fostered and supported by the State and its various agencies—the Office of the Attorney General is committed to promoting equity as one of its core values and guiding principles. This commitment is reflected in Attorney General Brown’s newly established Office of Equity, Policy, and Engagement which is focused on developing innovative, equity-centered strategies to advance the Office’s priorities. Social equity seeks to scale these same principles, with the National Academy of Public Administration defining social equity as “the fair, just and equitable management of all institutions serving the public directly or by contract; the fair, just and

¹ See: <https://business.maryland.gov/why-maryland/diversity-equity-inclusion/>

equitable distribution of public services and implementation of public policy; and the commitment to promote fairness, justice, and equity in the formation of public policy.”²

Social equity programs and practices broadly support Marylanders by: ensuring compliance with State and federal nondiscrimination laws; dismantling structural and institutional barriers to equal opportunity; redressing the impact of historically discriminatory laws and policies; fostering a culture of innovation and creative problem-solving; and promoting respect, understanding, and the celebration of diverse perspectives.

The need for State-level action and elevation in support of social equity is greater than ever. In establishing the Department of Social Equity, the Office of the Attorney General welcomes a State agency dedicated to this issue who can collaborate with our Office and other stakeholders to advance the critical work of promoting fairness, justice, and equity in State government and State-regulated activities.

For these reasons, the Office of the Attorney General urges the Appropriations Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 1253.

cc: Committee Members

² See: https://web.archive.org/web/20090506083627/http://napawash.org/aa_social_equity/index.html