



State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

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Senate Bill 490 – State Boards, Committees, Commissions, Task Forces, and Workgroups – Elimination of Citizenship Requirements and Establishment of Diversity Requirements Position: Support with Amendment

Dear Chairperson Feldman, Vice Chairperson Kagan, and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment 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.

Senate Bill 490 deletes references within Maryland law requiring individuals serving on the many public bodies in service to our State to be citizens of the United States, replacing them with existing references to be private individuals and/or residents. SB490 also requires that, to the extent practicable, the membership of any public body created by State law shall reflect the full diversity of the State.

MCCR supports SB490 because we believe that statutory provisions requiring citizenship to serve on public bodies are both onerous and outdated. As an agency governed by a nine-member Board of Commissioners appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the State Senate, MCCR knows first-hand the value of having private individuals representing all different walks of life across Maryland involved in agency policymaking and initiatives. To prevent a qualified individual from bringing their expertise, background, and life story to our Commission simply because they do not have citizenship, we believe, would be a disservice to Marylanders. The only exception to this that MCCR can support is in instances where federal or other applicable law requires citizenship as a condition to membership on these public bodies. MCCR encourages the General Assembly to examine all affected public bodies to make sure that removal of citizenship does not present a conflict.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable with amendment vote on SB490. 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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