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Health and Government Operations Committee
240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Friday, March 7, 2025

HB1055 – Commission on Nondiscrimination - Establishment

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison and Esteemed Members of the Health and Government Operations 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 **House Bill 1055**, titled "Commission on Nondiscrimination – Establishment."

HB1055 proposes the establishment of the Commission on Nondiscrimination, tasked with monitoring and studying nondiscrimination laws and regulations, assessing the impacts of federal actions on these laws, and recommending legislative measures to address any deficiencies in Maryland's nondiscrimination protections.

This bill is of paramount importance to our community, particularly considering recent federal actions that threaten to undermine civil rights protections. For instance, President Trump's executive orders aimed at dismantling diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs have raised significant concerns about the erosion of protections for marginalized groups, including the LGBTQIA+ community.

The establishment of the Commission on Nondiscrimination is a proactive measure to safeguard and enhance civil rights within Maryland. The commission's duties, as outlined in the bill, include:

1. **Studying the Realization of Equality Under the Law:** The commission will explore how the state can fully realize the principle of equality, ensuring that all individuals receive fair treatment under state and local laws.

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FreeState Justice, Inc. is a social justice organization that works through direct legal services, legislative and policy advocacy, and community engagement to enable Marylanders across the spectrum of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identities to be free to live authentically, with safety and dignity, in all communities throughout our state.

2. **Identifying Gaps in Current Frameworks:** By examining existing civil rights and nondiscrimination enforcement mechanisms, the commission can identify inconsistencies or deficiencies that may leave certain groups vulnerable to discrimination.
3. **Monitoring Federal Actions:** The commission will assess the impacts of federal government actions on civil rights and nondiscrimination enforcement at all levels, ensuring that Maryland remains vigilant against any adverse federal policies.
4. **Recommending Legislative Actions:** Based on its findings, the commission will propose legislation to address identified gaps, inconsistencies, or deficiencies, thereby strengthening Maryland's commitment to civil rights.

Given the current national climate, where federal policies have increasingly targeted DEI initiatives and transgender rights, Maryland must take a stand to protect its residents. The commission's ability to hold public meetings and convene workgroups ensures that diverse voices, especially those from marginalized communities, are heard and considered in the policymaking process.

As an advocate deeply involved in the fight for LGBTQIA+ rights, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by our community. The rollback of federal protections has instilled fear and uncertainty among LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly transgender youth seeking gender-affirming care. The recent executive orders have led to legal battles and disruptions in essential healthcare services. Establishing this commission would reaffirm Maryland's commitment to protecting the rights and well-being of all its residents.

In closing, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report for **HB1055**. This legislation is a critical step toward ensuring that Maryland remains a beacon of equality and justice, proactively addressing potential threats to civil rights and reinforcing our state's dedication to protecting all its residents from discrimination.

Best,



Ronnie L. Taylor

Sources:

1. [The future of corporate DEI initiatives: legal uncertainty, enforcement risks, and strategic adaptation | Reuters](#)
2. [Judge pauses Trump order on gender-affirming care for trans youth | AP News](#)
3. [Trump Administration Gets Sued Over DEI, Gender Orders | TIME](#)