

# **Testimony in support of SB0694 - Violations of Cou**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0694\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV

03/05/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON SB#0694- POSITION: FAVORABLE**

**Human Relations - Violations of County Discrimination Laws – Complaints**

**TO:** Chair Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0694, **Human Relations - Violations of County Discrimination Laws – Complaints**

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights has specific duties it performs for the residents of Maryland. <sup>1</sup> The **mission** of the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights is to protect equal opportunity for all by advancing and upholding civil rights laws and empowering communities. Our **vision** is to have a State where equal opportunity is a lived reality for every person. <sup>2</sup>

This bill will extend this mission to the counties and Baltimore city where the local bodies will treat the complaint with the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights as one that also satisfies certain prerequisites to commencing a civil action alleging the violation of a county discrimination law.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#0694.**

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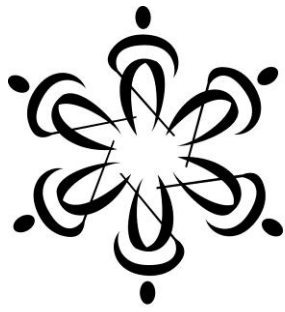
<sup>1</sup> <https://mccr.maryland.gov/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://mccr.maryland.gov/history-vision-governance>

# **3-5-2026 Favorable SB0694 Violations of County Dis**

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FAV



NATIONAL FEDERATION  
OF THE BLIND  
MARYLAND

*Live the life you want.*

Subject: Favorable SB0694 Violations of County Discrimination Laws - Complaints

From: Ronza Othman, President  
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland  
15 Charles Plaza, #3002  
Baltimore, MD 21201 [president@nfbmd.org](mailto:president@nfbmd.org)

To: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to vote in favor of SB0694 Violations of County Discrimination Laws – Complaints. This bill will broaden the power of the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights by allowing it to work with the counties and complainant to determine if discrimination takes place. The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights will have a broader knowledge base on discrimination and will be able to be more effective in determining the remedies that a complainant may receive.

Blind people face many types of discrimination from housing to employment and discrimination by rideshare companies. Many times, a county may not understand the true capabilities of a blind person and would tend to side with the defendant because the county lacks knowledge. For instance, the driver of a rideshare company does not pick up the blind passenger because he doesn't believe that the person can get in and out of the vehicle successfully. The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights will have a better understanding of blind people and their capabilities. SB0694 will make the dream of equality a reality.

For those reasons, we ask for a favorable report on SB0694. For questions, please contact me at [President@nfbmd.org](mailto:President@nfbmd.org) or at 443-426-4110.

# **SB694**

Uploaded by: Spencer Dove

Position: FAV



# State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

*Respect...Integrity...Effective Communication*

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March 5, 2026

**Senate Bill 694 – Human Relations – Violations of  
County Discrimination Laws – Complaints  
Position: Support**

Dear Chairperson Smith, Vice Chairperson Waldstreicher, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings 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 694 makes a technical change to current law clarifying that filing a discrimination complaint with MCCR satisfies the exhaustion of remedies requirement necessary for an individual in Baltimore, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties to initiate private action in Circuit Court alleging a violation of county anti-discrimination law. This technical change is consistent with an individual’s current right to assert a violation of Maryland or federal anti-discrimination law in either State or federal court.

This bill does not alter or expand an individual’s existing private right of action. Rather, SB694 simply enables an individual to claim a violation of county anti-discrimination law in court if that individual initially opted to submit an administrative complaint to MCCR as opposed to, for example, the Howard County Office of Human Rights & Equity.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable vote on SB694. 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 civil rights in Maryland.

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

William Donald Schaefer Tower, 6 Saint Paul Street, Suite 900, Baltimore, Maryland 21202-1631  
Phone: 410-767-8600 · Toll Free: 1-800-637-6247 · Maryland Relay: 711 · Fax: 410-333-1841  
Website: [mccr.maryland.gov](http://mccr.maryland.gov) · E-Mail: [mccr@maryland.gov](mailto:mccr@maryland.gov)

# **SB 694\_ Human Relations - Violations of County Di**

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: UNF

**SB 694:** Human Relations - Violations of County Discrimination Laws - Complaints:  
Please vote to **OPPOSE** this bill.

Dear Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am writing to strongly urge you to **OPPOSE SB 694**.

**SB 694** would allow individuals alleging violations of local county discrimination laws to file complaints directly with the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights instead of first exhausting remedies through the county's designated human relations or civil rights unit. This change **undermines local control and bypasses county-specific procedures**.

County discrimination laws are tailored to reflect the unique needs, priorities, and community standards of each jurisdiction. **Local human rights commissions or agencies are best positioned to investigate, mediate, and resolve complaints under their own ordinances, often with greater knowledge of local context, faster processing, and community-based solutions.** Allowing direct filing with the MCCR risks overwhelming the state agency with local matters, duplicating efforts, and delaying resolutions.

**Respect for local governance is a core principle—counties should retain authority over enforcement of their own laws. This bill weakens that authority and could lead to inconsistent application of discrimination protections across Maryland.**

For these reasons, I respectfully ask you to **vote against SB 694**.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of my concerns regarding this important local governance and civil rights enforcement matter.

Sincerely,

Trudy Tibbals