

State of Maryland

Commission on Civil Rights

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



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January 31, 2019

Testimony for the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights FY 2020 Budget Hearing Position: Concur with Governor's Allowance

To the Members of the House and Senate Health & Human Services subcommittees:

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Department of Legislative Services Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Analysis. We would like to thank our assigned analyst, Ms. Sierra Boney, for her thorough analysis. While the current budget realities and resulting spending plan present challenges, we believe it is responsible.

The recommended spending plan will preserve the opportunity for the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) to meet its production standards because no currently filled staff reductions will occur. In fact, productivity has already increased as a result of targeted staff training coupled with the gained experience of recent Civil Rights Officer (investigator) hires. In addition, our recently instituted processing efficiencies are yielding positive results on the number of days to complete case closures.

In FY 2017, Intake trended sharply upward over previous years due to a number of systemic complaints that were transferred to MCCR from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). While there was a decrease in the number of Intakes in FY 2018, as detailed in our Annual Report, the FY2018 numbers are more aligned with agency expectations based on previous years. Our strong Intake numbers are the direct result to the relationship-building and collaboration efforts by our Education & Outreach Unit (E&O). Of particular note, in FY 2018 E&O held 160 events, trained 4,099 individuals, and provided outreach to approximately 6,655 individuals at functions and programs with state agencies, business, and organizations throughout the state.

In an effort to build upon our successful connections with partners and stakeholders, and in an effort to create an innovative forum to discuss matters of civil and human rights, MCCR hosted a gala celebration on April 28, 2018, commemorating the 50 year anniversary of the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, as well as the more than 90 years MCCR has been combatting discrimination throughout Maryland. Federal and state fair housing laws prohibit discrimination in the sale, rental and financing of housing based on race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. The gala was a huge success and was attended by more than 300 people from across the State.

While we have had significant reductions in staffing over the years, please note that any future reductions in full staffing levels will have a debilitating impact on the service delivery of the agency. At our current staffing levels, MCCR is continually challenged at meeting our federal contracts and obligations with the EEOC and U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development. Despite our successes, the number of cases assigned to staff creates little margin for error and overwhelms our investigators who go above and beyond what is expected of them in order to carry out the mission of the agency. Even a singular reduction would threaten this balance and jeopardize the agency's sustainability in maintaining its relationship with our federal partners.

In closing, MCCR respectfully requests the Subcommittees' support in concurring with the Governor's allowance for MCCR in his FY 2020 budget.

Background: The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (formerly the Maryland Commission on Human Relations) is the State agency responsible for the enforcement of laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state contracts based upon race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, and physical and mental disability.