

State of Maryland

Commission on Civil Rights

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



Officers

Alvin O. Gillard, Executive Director
Cleveland L. Horton II, Deputy Director
Nicolette Young, Assistant Director
Glendora C. Hughes, General Counsel
Kara N. Hunt, Ph.D., Director of Education & Outreach

Governor
Larry Hogan
Lt. Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford
Commission Chairperson
Stephanie Suerth, MPA, CCEP
Commission Vice Chairperson
Janssen E. Evelyn, Esq.
Commissioners
Diane E. Bernier
Eileen M. Levitt, SPHR, SHRM-SCP
Rabbi Binyamin Marwick
Magdalena S. Navarro, MSc
Gary C. Norman, Esq.
Jeff Rosen
Gina McKnight-Smith, PharmD, MBA

Maryland Commission on Civil Rights Fiscal Year 2023 Operating Budget Response to Department of Legislative Services Budget Analysis

House Appropriations Committee
House Health and Social Services Subcommittee
Delegate Kirill Reznik
January 26, 2022

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Senate Health and Human Services Subcommittee
Senator Melony Griffith
January 28, 2022

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 2023 Budget Analysis. We would like to thank our assigned analyst, Mr. Samuel Quist, for his 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.

As you know, the State workforce was ordered to begin working from home in March 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and continued into FY 2021. Fortunately, MCCR had taken steps over the previous years to implement an infrastructure that enabled staff to complete their work remotely, while ensuring that we were capable of connecting with and receiving complaints of alleged unlawful discrimination from throughout the State. Because of these proactive measures, the Commission was able to mitigate much of the impact on service delivery once remote work operations were initiated.

Despite the continued challenges resulting from the pandemic, staff departures, and staff reorganization, MCCR saw both success and reductions in FY 2021. The Commission fulfilled

MCCR's Biennial Civil Rights & Fair Housing Gala Celebration: April 30, 2022
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 · E-Mail: mccr@maryland.gov

the obligations of its federal contracts with both the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (“EEOC”) and the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (“HUD”). Our total case closure numbers were 517 EEOC closures,* and 124 HUD closures.

In FY 2021, MCCR reduced its contract production number with the EEOC because we transferred four Investigators to our newly dedicated Housing Unit as requested by HUD. This re-organization helped to stabilize and create sustainability for our housing efforts, but also created a temporary reduction in the number of EEOC (employment) cases completed.

Increasing our Education and Outreach (E&O) footprint has been vital in reaching our vision of having a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination. Of particular note, MCCR has continued to implement the passage of House Bill 1423, which requires all State employees to complete a minimum amount of sexual harassment training on a regular, rolling basis. In response to increased requests for trainings, MCCR drafted a virtual sexual harassment module and course booklet that meets the legislative requirement for interactive training and expands the subject matter to include relevant and prescient information for teleworking entities. Additionally, as a result of the ongoing pandemic in FY 2021 MCCR moved to a more robust usage of virtual platforms to offer all of its training modules.

While we have not had significant reductions in staffing over the past few years, please note that any 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 HUD. Despite our successes, the number of cases assigned to staff continues to create 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. In order to alleviate the pressure created by ever expanding caseloads, new cases have been held back from being assigned into investigations to give Investigators an opportunity to complete already assigned cases. This has created a backlog in unassigned cases, but it has helped to ensure that cases are being investigated thoroughly and fairly. The staff of MCCR continues to work hard and creatively to reduce our case inventory, and the approved contractual conversions have helped.

In closing, MCCR respectfully requests the committees support of the Governor’s FY 2023 Allowance. As per the committees’ request, MCCR will provide a status update on the total inventory of pending and open cases that have been received for processing by MCCR, as well as the status of current investigator caseloads and case processing times. The report will include the current total number of open and pending cases, the number of cases that have been unresolved for more than one year, the number awaiting assignment, the current caseload per investigator, as well as the estimated timeframe for assigning remaining outstanding cases to investigators.

* Timeframe for EEOC closures is October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021.