

Office of the Statewide EEO Coordinator **EEO Connection Newsletter**

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Statewide EEO Coordinator's Message

Welcome to the latest edition of the EEO Connection newsletter, a quarterly publication for state of Maryland government employees. The Office of the Statewide EEO Coordinator team appreciates your readership and support. As we begin the last quarter of 2025, we're excited to share some updates and news.

First, the OSEEOC team is currently working to develop the FY 2025 Annual Statewide EEO Report. This would not be possible without the statewide EEO community. Thank you to all EEO Offices who submitted their agency's EEO program data. This has allowed us to remain on schedule with the next steps in the development process.

Secondly, the OSEEOC team is preparing to complete the 2025 United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, State and Local Government Information Report (EEO4). This is a mandatory biennial data collection that requires all State and local governments with 100 or more employees to submit demographic workforce data and more. The OSEEOC will share additional information once it becomes available from the EEOC.

Thirdly, the OSEEOC will be hosting professional development opportunities from October 27 to 31, 2025. I encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities as they will be the final sessions offered by our team for 2025.

That said, turn to page 4 and read about Eric's ID Law, which is an advancement in equity for people with disabilities. On pages 6-8 read about noteworthy rulings. On page 11, check out the community shoutout, which features Jasmine Doyle, Fair Practices Officer for the Maryland Cannabis Commission. That's not all: turn the page to read more.

Nicole Webb, MBA, SHRM-CP
Statewide EEO Coordinator

Office of the Statewide EEO Coordinator

Mission

- Administer and enforce state equal employment opportunity laws and policies.
- Promote a work environment free of any unlawful discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.
- Assist in building a well-diversified workforce for Maryland State Government employees and job applicants.

Ask the OSEEOC Team

Q: When an employee files an EEO complaint with their state agency's EEO Office, can they also submit their complaint to an external regulatory agency?

OSEEOC Answer:

Yes, the employee has the right to file an EEO complaint internally and/or externally. According to State Personnel & Pensions Article, Title 5, Subtitle 2, an employee may file a complaint internally to their agency, and appeal to the OSEEOC. The employee may also file a complaint with the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

Q: How should an ADA Coordinator support an employee requesting an ADA accommodation?

OSEEOC Answer:

First, help the employee articulate their accommodation needs and encourage them to provide relevant medical or disability-related information to support their request. Facilitate the interactive process between the employee and employer to explore reasonable accommodations that enable an employee to perform their essential job functions without it imposing undue hardship on the business operation. Common accommodations may include a modified work schedule, assistive technology, reassignment and more. Keep thorough records of all communications and reach out to the OSEEOC for guidance if there are questions or concerns. Resources for ADA reasonable accommodations can be found on the OSEEOC website, under [Toolkit](#).

EEO Spotlight

Eric's ID Law – Advancing Equity for People with Disabilities

In a major win for disability rights, Maryland has passed [Eric's ID Law](#)—a new law that simplifies the process for people with disabilities to obtain a state ID. Named after disability advocate Eric Carpenter-Grantham, the legislation removes burdensome documentation requirements by allowing letters from disability service providers to serve as valid verification. This change is especially impactful for individuals living in group homes or under guardianship, who often face challenges meeting traditional ID criteria.

For EEO advocates, Eric's ID Law underscores a crucial truth: access to a valid state ID is more than just paperwork—it's a gateway to opportunity. Without proper identification, job seekers with disabilities may be unable to complete onboarding processes, verify eligibility for government programs, or request reasonable accommodations—all of which are essential for securing and maintaining employment. These identification barriers can lead to a cycle of exclusion, keeping individuals from fully participating in the workforce and broader society. By addressing this early, structural obstacle, Eric's ID Law helps ensure that people with disabilities can more easily pursue economic independence, civic engagement, and equal treatment under the law. It's a strong reminder that true inclusion begins long before the first day on the job—it starts with creating equitable access to the basic tools people need to show up, contribute, and thrive.

Eric Carpenter-Grantham's personal advocacy was key in pushing this bill forward, and his story is a powerful example of how centering lived experiences leads to more effective, human-centered policy. As we celebrate this progress, employers and agencies should reflect on their own processes and consider how red tape may unintentionally exclude people with disabilities.

Explore more: William J. Ford, [Maryland Matters](#), [‘Hidden’ disabilities step into the spotlight as driver's license bill moves closer to becoming law](#).

EEO Spotlight

Religious Accommodations – Respecting Faith, Advancing Inclusion

As fall and winter bring a wide range of religious and cultural observances—such as Yom Kippur, Diwali, Hanukkah, Christmas, and Bodhi Day—it’s a timely moment to revisit Maryland’s religious accommodation policy. State employees have the right to request reasonable accommodations to observe their sincerely held religious beliefs, reflecting Maryland’s commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and an inclusive, respectful workplace.

Under both [state law](#) and [federal law](#), employees are entitled to request accommodations for sincerely held religious beliefs or practices—so long as the request does not impose an undue hardship on agency operations. A religious accommodation might include schedule changes to observe holy days, adjustments to break times for daily prayer, wearing religious attire (such as hijabs, turbans, or yarmulkes), refraining from certain work tasks that conflict with religious beliefs, or exemption from dress codes that conflict with religious grooming practices (such as growing a beard or wearing a head covering).

The process begins with the employee submitting a request—ideally in writing—to their EEO Officer. This request should include a description of the religious practice and the accommodation being sought. From there, the EEO Officer initiates an interactive dialogue to explore possible options. This conversation is key: it allows both the employee and employer to collaborate on solutions that respect religious needs while ensuring workplace responsibilities are met. Agencies are not required to approve the exact accommodation requested, but they must make a good-faith effort to identify a workable solution, unless doing so creates an undue hardship.

Importantly, Maryland does not typically require documentation from a religious leader, focusing instead on the sincerity of the belief. As the holiday season approaches, honoring religious accommodations is more than a compliance measure—it’s a reflection of our shared values of fairness, dignity, and full participation for all.

Noteworthy Ruling

EEOC Sues Smithfield Fresh Meats Corp. for Pregnancy Discrimination

Smithfield Fresh Meats Corp., a Virginia-based corporation which operates a facility in Tarheel, North Carolina, violated federal law when it refused to provide a reasonable accommodation to an employee for pregnancy-related limitations, forced her to take unpaid leave and then fired her, according to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

According to the lawsuit, the employee informed Smithfield of her pregnancy shortly after she was hired. After the employee was involved in a workplace accident, she began having pregnancy-related complications that required medical attention. Her physician imposed certain restrictions on her, including a lifting restriction. The employee told Smithfield of the restrictions and requested a reasonable accommodation. Smithfield, which operates the largest pork processing facility in the world, told the employee that Smithfield does not provide accommodations for pregnancy. Smithfield then required the employee to take unpaid leave and, approximately two weeks later, fired her.

Such alleged conduct violates the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), which requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations for pregnancy, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination because of pregnancy. The EEOC filed suit (EEOC v. Smithfield Fresh Meats Corp., Case No. 7:25-cv-01410-M) in U.S. District for the Eastern District of North Carolina after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its administrative conciliation process. The EEOC seeks monetary damages for the employee, including compensatory and punitive damages, and injunctive relief against the employer to prevent such unlawful conduct in the future.

Click here to read more: <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-smithfield-fresh-meats-corp-pregnancy-discrimination>

Noteworthy Ruling

Buffalo Wild Wings to Pay \$47,500 in EEOC Religious Discrimination Lawsuit

BWW Resources, LLC, which owns and operates Buffalo Wild Wings restaurants, agreed to pay \$47,500 to settle a religious discrimination lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

The EEOC's suit said that a server candidate, who wore long skirts in public because of her sincerely held religious beliefs, asked the general manager of Buffalo Wild Wings' Douglasville, Georgia location about a job opening. The general manager confirmed the restaurant was hiring, but then mocked the candidate's religious beliefs.

After the candidate applied for a server position, the restaurant failed to interview her or otherwise contact her regarding the open position. Shortly after, an assistant manager said the restaurant would not hire the applicant because it was unusual for servers to wear long skirts in a sports bar. The location did not hire the applicant and hired five servers within two months of her application, according to the EEOC's suit.

The restaurant's alleged conduct violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The EEOC filed suit (Civil Action No. 4:23-CV-00167-CDL) in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division, after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement via its conciliation process.

The two-year consent decree resolving the EEOC's lawsuit requires BWW Resources to provide monetary relief to the applicant; provide specialized training to the managers, supervisors and human resources personnel for the Douglasville location; and post a notice in the workplace informing employees of the settlement and of their rights against discrimination. Furthermore, the company will provide the EEOC with periodic reports regarding requests for religious accommodations from future job applicants, as well as employee complaints of religious discrimination or retaliation.

Click here to read more: <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/buffalo-wild-wings-pay-47500-eeoc-religious-discrimination-lawsuit>

Noteworthy Ruling

Kwik Trip Inc. to Pay \$35,000 in EEOC Disability Discrimination Charge

Kwik Trip Inc., a family-owned gasoline station and convenience store with over 800 locations in the upper Midwest, agreed to resolve a discrimination charge filed with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

As a result of successful conciliation efforts between the parties, Kwik Trip agreed to provide \$35,000 to a former employee and committed to provide additional training on equal employment opportunity, including Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) training for all employees and managers to resolve a finding of disability discrimination by the EEOC.

According to the EEOC's investigation, an employee was hired as a full-time guest service/kitchen associate in October 2021. In March 2022, the employee submitted a reasonable accommodation request to modify her work schedule and duties. While Kwik Trip initially intended to accommodate the employee's medical restrictions, it misinterpreted the reasonable accommodation request and reduced the employee's full-time work schedule to about nine hours per week, forcing her to resign.

Under the conciliation agreement resolving the charge, the former employee will receive \$35,000 in back pay and compensatory damages. Kwik Trip will retain an experienced consultant to train supervisors, managers and HR employees about their responsibilities and employees' rights under the ADA. Kwik Trip will also provide compliance-related reporting to the EEOC. The EEOC will monitor compliance with these obligations for the next two years.

Click here to read more: <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/kwik-trip-inc-pay-35000-eeoc-disability-discrimination-charge>

Diversity Corner

Build a tower, build a team



Photo credit: Ted.com

Tom Wujec is a business visualization expert and a Fellow at Autodesk, where he helps teams solve complex problems through design thinking and visual collaboration. In this engaging talk, he shares lessons from the “marshmallow challenge”—a hands-on team-building exercise using spaghetti, tape, and a marshmallow. Wujec reveals how different groups (like CEOs, students, and engineers) perform under pressure, showing that success depends not on titles, but on collaboration, communication, and iteration. This directly relates to EEO principles by demonstrating how diverse teams that value every voice—regardless of hierarchy—consistently perform better. It’s a powerful metaphor for how inclusive work environments lead to more effective, equitable outcomes.

Click to view the video:

https://www.ted.com/talks/tom_wujec_build_a_tower_build_a_team/transcript

Actionable Tip: Make space for all voices. In your next team project or meeting, pause to invite input from someone who hasn’t spoken yet. Inclusive collaboration leads to better solutions—and stronger towers.

Diversity Corner

My identity is a superpower – not an obstacle



Photo credit: Ted.com

America Ferrera is an award-winning actress, producer, and activist known for her groundbreaking roles in film and television (*Ugly Betty*, *Real Women Have Curves*) and her advocacy for authentic representation in media. In this powerful talk, Ferrera shares her personal journey navigating Hollywood as a Latina woman and challenges the systems that tried to diminish her identity. She argues that true inclusion comes not from asking people to assimilate, but from embracing the fullness of who they are. Her story resonates deeply with EEO values by affirming that identity should never be a barrier to opportunity—it's a strength that enriches workplaces, stories, and communities when fully recognized and supported.

Click to view the video:

https://www.ted.com/talks/america_ferrera_my_identity_is_a_superpower_not_an_obsacle

Actionable Tip: Celebrate authenticity. Reflect on ways your workplace honors individual identities. Do team members feel empowered to bring their full selves to the table? If not, consider how you can help create space for that to happen.

Community Shoutout

Jasmine Doyle – Maryland Cannabis Administration



The OSEEOC would like to introduce Jasmine Doyle, Fair Practices Officer and EEO Officer for the Maryland Cannabis Administration, to the Statewide EEO community. Jasmine began her work in Equal Employment Opportunity in 2018, building on early experience as a Fair Housing Investigator and later as a Detective in her department's EEO unit. These roles provided her with valuable insight into civil rights issues. They strengthened her passion for advocacy, notably as she witnessed firsthand the challenges employees faced when mistreated due to factors such as race or gender. Recognizing the importance of EEO on a broader scale, Jasmine pursued a career in State government to continue making a meaningful impact.

Since November 2024, she has served in her current role at the Maryland Cannabis Administration, where she is responsible for ensuring equitable employment practices, promoting diversity and inclusion, investigating complaints, overseeing compliance with EEO laws, and providing training to staff. Jasmine shares that one of her most significant challenges has been finding the right balance between empathy and impartiality when addressing sensitive workplace issues. However, she remains deeply motivated by the opportunity to help individuals navigate difficult situations and finds it rewarding that no two cases are ever the same. For her, the variety and complexity of the work keep it both meaningful and exciting, while allowing her to apply her full range of skills and experience.

Thank you Jasmine for your contributions to the Statewide EEO Community.

2025 Diversity Calendar

October 2025

Date	Holiday
October 1-2	Yom Kippur
October 13	Indigenous Peoples' Day
October 20-21	Diwali

November 2025

Date	Holiday
November 11	Veterans Day
November 20	Transgender Day of Remembrance
November 27	Thanksgiving

December 2025

Date	Holiday
December 8	Bodhi Day
December 14 - 22	Hanukkah
December 25	Christmas
December 26 – January 1	Kwanzaa

Meetings and Trainings

October 2025

Statewide EEO Program Overview - Virtual Session

Date: Monday, October 27, 2025

Time: 10:00 am - 11:30 am

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/36VF1N1EDc8nUiw96>

MD Whistleblower Law Information Session: Virtual Session

Date: Tuesday, October 28, 2025

Time: 10:00 am – 11:30 am

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/GXa6TMhVGHingz5A>

The Fundamentals of the Americans with Disabilities (ADA), Americans with Disabilities Amendment Act, State Disability Laws and Policies, and the Reasonable Accommodations Process – Virtual Session

Date: Wednesday, October 29, 2025

Time: 10:00 am – 12:30 pm

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/f53Gw4uVH74AG9rp7>

ADA Coordinators Meeting – Virtual Session

Date: Thursday, October 30, 2025

Time: 10:00 am – 11:30 am

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/rBzoMQdQrGpFCXw19>

Reasonable Accommodation Requests and the Interactive Process – A Hands-on Approach: In Person Session

Date: Friday, October 31, 2025

Time: 10:00 am – 12:30 pm

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/YEFaeXWmC8ZQHdfv6>

Meetings and Trainings

November 2025

Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Train-the-Trainer – Virtual Session

Presented by: Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR)

Date: Wednesday November 5, 2025, and Thursday, November 6, 2025

Time: 9:00 am – 3:00 pm each day

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/KUmpC7WrkKJVcGbK6>

Resources for EEO Professionals

Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)
dors.maryland.gov

US Department of Labor
www.dol.gov

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
www.dbm.maryland.gov/employees/Pages/EAP.aspx

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
www.eeoc.gov

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)
askjan.org

Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR)
mccr.maryland.gov

Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)
www.shrm.org

Maryland Department of Disabilities
mdod.maryland.gov

Out & Equal Workplace Advocates
outandequal.org

Chimes
chimes.org

Maryland LGBT Chamber of Commerce
mdlgbt.org

OSEEEOC Team

Nicole Webb

Statewide EEO Coordinator

Nicole.Webb@maryland.gov

410-767-4061

Kia Webb

Senior EEO Compliance Officer

Kia.Webb1@maryland.gov

410-767-4761

Vacant

EEO Compliance Officer

410-767-1013

Aryn Haxel

EEO Compliance Coordinator

Aryn.Haxel@maryland.gov

410-767-4735