

Office of the Statewide
EEO Coordinator
EEO Connection Newsletter

Issue 3
July 2026 – September 2026

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 third quarter of 2026, we’re excited to share some updates and news.

First, the OSEEOC recognizes the changes that have and continue to impact the EEO community. Laws and practices that we were once familiar with have changed and now require us to implement measures to ensure that our interpretation and application are compliant. This is why the OSEEOC is committed to updating you on what’s changing, the impact it may have on the work you do, and how to prepare to comply.

Second, the OSEEOC is preparing to develop the FY 2026 Annual Statewide EEO Report. Email notifications have been sent to agencies' EEO teams requesting data on their agency’s EEO program no later than Friday, August 7, 2026. Therefore, mark your calendars and prepare accordingly. Additionally, the OSEEOC will be hosting two “Annual Statewide EEO Report: What you need to know!” virtual sessions this quarter to further assist you. Registration information can be found on page 14.

Thirdly, the OSEEOC will host professional development trainings and meetings from July 2026 – September 2026. Registration information can be found on pages 14-16. In addition, meeting invitations will be sent directly to ADA Coordinators for the August quarterly meeting. Therefore, please accept the invitations if you plan to attend.

With that said, turn to page 5 and read about Governor Moore’s signing of the Executive Order creating an Immigrant Rights Protection Task Force. On page 6, read about how the EEOC released a New National Enforcement Plan. On page 8, read about the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights release of the elements of proof to enhance transparency and public understanding of the complaint process. On pages 9-12, read about noteworthy rulings. That’s not all: turn the page to read more.

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Statewide EEO Coordinator

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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: What is the retention schedule for EEO case files?

OSEEOC Answer: The Maryland State Archives Records Management Guidance maintains the retention schedule which can be found at <https://guide.msa.maryland.gov/pages/item.aspx?ID=SE52-3838>

Q: When my EEO unit is short-staffed, can a member of the OSEEOC team assist with completing the designated job duties?

OSEEOC Answer: The agency's Fair Practices Officer should consult with the agency's leadership to identify appropriate staffing to fulfill the EEO unit's job duties and overall responsibilities. The OSEEOC team may provide consultations and guidance as needed.

Q: When employees make verbal inquiries regarding filing an EEO Complaint, what should be the next steps for the EEO professionals?

OSEEOC Answer: The agency's Fair Practices Officer or EEO Officer should educate the employee on their EEO rights within the Maryland State government and their ability to file a complaint with the two external regulatory agencies (i.e., Maryland Commission on Civil Rights and U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission). It's also a best practice to follow up with the employee in writing with the information shared verbally. For the employee's convenience, provide specific names, email addresses, telephone numbers, and appropriate website information.

EEO Spotlight 1

Preparing for the FY 2026 Annual Statewide EEO Report

Each year, the Office of the Statewide EEO Coordinator (OSEEOC) publishes the Annual Statewide EEO Report, which provides a comprehensive overview of workforce demographics, personnel actions, reasonable accommodations, and discrimination complaints across all Executive Branch agencies. This report, mandated by Maryland law, may be used as a data tool for decision-making across state government. **While the development of this report is the responsibility of the OSEEOC, agencies across state government must submit their agencies FY 2026 EEO program data to the OSEEOC no later than Friday, August 7, 2026, so that it can be incorporated into the annual report.**

The OSEEOC is also hosting two information sessions (i.e. Understanding the Annual Statewide EEO Report: What You Need to Know!) to assist EEO Professionals statewide with compiling this data for timely submission. Registration information is on page 13 of this newsletter.

EEO Spotlight 2

Governor Moore Signs Executive Order Creating Immigrant Rights Protection Task Force

Press release date: June 5, 2026

Governor Wes Moore signed an [executive order](#) to create a 12-month statewide task force on immigrant rights protection. The task force brings together State agencies in partnership with the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the Comptroller, and other state leaders to coordinate efforts to address the fraud and exploitation of immigrant Marylanders.

Immigrants comprise approximately 17 percent of Maryland’s population and nearly 22 percent of the state’s labor force. Despite significant contributions to the state’s economic, social, and cultural life, many immigrant Marylanders have long faced discrimination and substandard services in areas such as legal services, employment, and housing.

More recently, immigrant communities have reported the emergence of new schemes targeting immigrants for exploitation and abuse, as unscrupulous actors seek to take advantage of immigrants’ fear of immigration enforcement. This predatory activity not only harms immigrants and their families, but it also distorts markets, impedes fair competition, and diminishes the safety and security of all Marylanders.

“Our immigrant communities contribute to the greatness of Maryland,” **said Governor Wes Moore**. “I have made it clear that we will not stand by while bad actors prey on immigrants in our communities. In forming this task force, we are demonstrating the unity and strength of our state when we join together against injustice.”

Click here to read more: <https://governor.maryland.gov/news/press-releases/governor-moore-signs-executive-order-creating-immigrant-rights-protection-task-force>

EEO Spotlight 3

EEOC Releases New National Enforcement Plan

Press release date: June 1, 2026

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) approved new [National Enforcement Plan \(NEP\)](#) for fiscal years 2025-2029.

The NEP replaces the agency’s fiscal year 2024-2028 Strategic Enforcement Plan. The NEP helps guide the EEOC’s work through all of the agency’s activities, including outreach, public education, technical assistance, enforcement, and litigation. It also reaffirms the agency’s three-pronged approach to eliminating discrimination in the workplace: prevention through education and outreach; the voluntary resolution of disputes, including through Alternative Dispute Resolution, pre-determination settlements, and conciliation agreements; and strong and evenhanded enforcement through litigation.

“The National Enforcement Plan reaffirms the agency’s unwavering commitment to merit-based, evenhanded enforcement of our nation’s civil rights laws,” **said EEOC Chair Andrea Lucas**. “By prioritizing intentional discrimination and underscoring that every worker must be treated as an individual under the law, this plan sharpens the agency’s focus on protecting equal opportunity for all Americans. It strategically directs enforcement resources toward the most serious and consequential unlawful employment practices to better safeguard workers’ civil rights nationwide.”

Click here to read more: <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-releases-new-national-enforcement-plan>

EEO Spotlight 4

Justice Department Concludes EEOC Disparate-Impact Guidelines Violate the Constitution

Press release date: June 9, 2026

The Department of Justice has issued an opinion to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (“EEOC”) that its guidelines about disparate-impact liability under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act are unconstitutional. The Office of Legal Counsel found that EEOC’s guidelines pressured employers to engage in racial discrimination. Under those guidelines, employers could be held liable for unequal hiring and promotion outcomes among different groups, without regard to the employer’s likely intent.

The Justice Department’s opinion for EEOC helps to implement Executive Order 14281, which rejected disparate-impact liability insofar as "it creates a near insurmountable presumption [that] unlawful discrimination exists where there are any differences in outcomes in certain circumstances among different races, sexes, or similar groups."

"Despite trying to promote equality, EEOC's disparate impact liability interpretation under Title VII actually fosters the very discrimination its guidelines seek to address," said Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche. "This opinion will now allow businesses to hire based on performance, restoring equal opportunities in the American workplace."

"The EEOC is grateful for the thoughtful and insightful analysis provided by Assistant Attorney General Gaiser and Deputy Assistant Attorney General Craddock regarding disparate impact under Title VII," EEOC Chair Andrea Lucas said. "We believe this opinion will provide clarity regarding the Constitutional limits of disparate impact in employment discrimination matters."

Click here to read more: <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-concludes-eoc-disparate-impact-guidelines-violate-constitution>

EEO Spotlight 5

Maryland Commission on Civil Rights Releases Elements of Proof to Enhance Transparency and Public Understanding of the Complaint Process

Press release date: June 22, 2026

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) announced the public release of its investigative [Elements of Proof - PDF - 556.81 KB](#), marking another significant step in the agency's ongoing commitment to transparency, accessibility, and public trust.

The [Elements of Proof - PDF - 556.81 KB](#) outline the legal standards and evidentiary requirements used by the Commission when investigating allegations of discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, state contracts, health services, and other areas protected under Maryland law.

For many individuals, the complaint process can feel complex, intimidating, and unfamiliar. By making these investigative standards publicly available, the Commission seeks to provide complainants, respondents, advocates, attorneys, employers, housing providers, and members of the public with a clearer understanding of how discrimination claims are evaluated.

"At the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights, we believe that transparency is not simply a value – it is a responsibility," said **Cleveland L. Horton II, Executive Director of the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights**. "For too long, many people have viewed civil rights investigations as occurring behind a mystical curtain. Today, we are pulling that curtain back. We want Marylanders to understand what we evaluate, what evidence is needed, and how decisions are made."

Click here to read more: <https://mccr.maryland.gov/about-mccr/news-updates/maryland-commission-civil-rights-releases-elements-proof-enhance-transparency-and-public>

Noteworthy Ruling 1

Dunkin' Donuts Franchisees to Pay \$250,000 in EEOC Disability Discrimination Suit

The Daly/Kenney Group, LLC and 15 related companies, owners and operators of Dunkin' Donuts restaurants in New Bedford and Fairhaven, Massachusetts, will pay \$250,000 and provide other relief to settle a disability discrimination lawsuit recently filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

According to the EEOC's lawsuit, since approximately March 2013, the Dunkin' Donuts franchisees had a policy which refused to provide reasonable accommodations to employees who had actual or perceived medical restrictions. Instead, the franchisees placed such employees on unpaid, indefinite leave, even if the restrictions did not prevent them from performing the essential functions of their jobs, the EEOC said. This practice, sometimes known as a "100% healed" policy, often resulted in forced resignation or discharge of employees who could not provide a doctor's note stating they had no restrictions. Additionally, two of the franchisees unlawfully commingled employees' medical records with their personnel files.

"We appreciate the defendant's willingness to enter into an early resolution of this case, eliminating the unlawful policy and appropriately compensating those harmed by it," said **Kimberly Cruz, regional attorney of the EEOC's New York District Office**. "100%-healed policies are rooted in outdated prejudices about workers with disabilities and do not belong in the modern workplace."

Such alleged conduct violates the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities, requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations that allow employees to do their jobs, and prohibits employers from commingling employee medical records and personnel files.

Click here to read more: <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/dunkin-donuts-franchisees-pay-250000-eeoc-disability-discrimination-suit>

Noteworthy Ruling 2

EEOC Sues Proper 21 for Pregnancy Discrimination

Proper Ventures, LLC and WSRZ Proper, LLC, operators of a restaurant chain in Washington known as Proper 21, violated federal law when it fired a floor manager while she was on maternity leave, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in a lawsuit announced.

According to the EEOC's lawsuit, Proper 21 repeatedly questioned the employee about her maternity leave and expressed discomfort with her working while she was pregnant. Proper 21 pressured her to take leave earlier than she intended despite her ability to continue working, and ultimately terminated her in January 2024 after she requested to extend her maternity leave by two weeks.

“Under federal law, employers may not discriminate on the basis of sex, including pregnancy and childbirth,” **said Debra Lawrence, regional attorney for the EEOC’s Philadelphia District.** “Employers must provide a workplace free from discrimination and bias, regardless of pregnancy status or any other protected characteristic. Firing an employee because she’d recently given birth is unconscionable.”

This alleged conduct violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended by the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 (PDA), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, including pregnancy, childbirth and related medical conditions. The EEOC filed suit (EEOC v. Proper Ventures, LLC and WSRZ Proper, LLC, Case No. 1:26-cv-01824) in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its administrative conciliation process.

Click here to read more: <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-proper-21-pregnancy-discrimination>

Noteworthy Ruling 3

Northwestern Medicine to Pay \$325,000 to Resolve EEOC Religious Discrimination Charges

Northwestern Medical Group (Northwestern Medicine) agreed to pay \$325,000 in monetary relief to a class of employees denied vaccine exemptions because of their religious beliefs or practices and to provide other relief following an investigation by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

The agreement resolves charges filed with the EEOC alleging discrimination against employees based on their religion when it denied reasonable accommodation requests to employees who requested a faith-based exemption to Northwestern Medicine's mandatory flu vaccination policy.

The EEOC's investigation found that Northwestern Medicine discriminated against a class of employees from November 10, 2023, to the present at its facilities across Illinois by denying these employees a religious accommodation and by denying them the opportunity to earn an annual bonus which the employer described as a "vaccine incentive bonus," intended to motivate compliance with the vaccination mandate policy.

"Workplace rules and incentives for vaccinations must fully comply with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, including the requirement to provide religious accommodations, absent undue hardship" **said EEOC Chair Andrea R. Lucas.** "Religious accommodations are not optional, they are a fundamental protection under federal civil rights law, and we appreciate the work of EEOC staff and Northwestern Medicine's cooperation in resolving this matter."

Click here to read more: <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/northwestern-medicine-pay-325000-resolve-eeoc-religious-discrimination-charges>

Noteworthy Ruling 4

EEOC Reaches Early \$5.5 Million Resolution With Central Transport Over Nationwide Sex Discrimination in Hiring

Central Transport, LLC, a nationwide trucking company based in Warren, Michigan with over 200 regional and local facilities, will pay \$5.5 million to resolve a federal lawsuit charging the company with violating federal law when it intentionally refused to hire qualified female truck drivers throughout the country, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) announced.

According to the EEOC's lawsuit, Central Transport, for at least the past ten years, repeatedly passed over qualified female truck driver applicants. Instead, the company routinely selected male truck drivers, many of whom were hired despite being less qualified or having less experience. Numerous female applicants reported that company personnel nationwide subjected them to different hiring procedures than those used for male applicants.

Several female driver applicants also observed Central Transport throwing their job applications in the trash at local truck terminals, and some company terminals including the Phoenix and El Paso locations did not hire any female truck drivers for a number of years despite having numerous female applicants. At a Dunbar, West Virginia truck terminal, the dispatcher informed a female applicant that corporate offices had instructed him not to hire any female truck drivers, according to the suit.

“Unfortunately, sex discrimination in hiring continues to be a problem in some industries,” said **Mary Jo O’Neill, regional attorney for the EEOC’s Phoenix District Office**. “It is illegal for employers to refuse to hire women because of their sex. We appreciate Central Transport’s willingness to resolve this case with an early settlement. We hope that through this consent decree, Central Transport’s efforts will result in a hiring process free from sex discrimination.”

Click here to read more: <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-reaches-early-55-million-resolution-central-transport-over-nationwide-sex>

2026 Diversity Calendar

July 2026

Date	Holiday
July 4th	Independence Day (State Offices closed on July 3, 2026)

August 2026

There are no federal or state holidays during this month.

September 2026

Date	Holiday
September 7th	Labor Day (State Offices closed)

Meetings and Trainings July 2026

July 2026

Annual Statewide EEO Report: What you need to know! – Virtual Session

Date: July 13, 2026

Time: 10:00 am – 11:30 am

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/RSuTt4Rzoyg5faUP6>

Statewide EEO Program Overview - Virtual Session

Date: July 15, 2026

Time: 10:00 am - 11:30 am

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/UmmN9aJQMePd4b2s9>

MD Whistleblower Law Information Session: Virtual Session

Date: July 16, 2026

Time: 10:00 am – 11:30 am

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/3MBD2pqkWE6jPnYW9>

Annual Statewide EEO Report: What you need to know! - Virtual Session

Date: July 22, 2026

Time: 10:00 am – 11:30 am

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/yggzAS4oF6Yd21LG8>

Non-Retaliation in the Workplace - Information Session - Virtual Session

Date: July 29, 2026

Time: 10:00 am - 11:30 am

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/1yqFNStMU7RhqnKU7>

Meetings and Trainings August 2026

August 2026

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: August 12, 2026

Time: 10:00 am – 12:30 pm

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/BXSqHRfPgCThoatv8>

Reasonable Accommodation Requests and the Interactive Process – A Hands-on Approach: **Virtual Session**

Date: August 19, 2026

Time: 10:00 am – 12:30 pm

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/73VER7xbTQKz5QAXA>

ADA Coordinators Meeting – **Virtual Session**

Date: August 27, 2026

Time: 10:00 am – 11:30 am

Please note: A meeting invitation will be sent to all ADA Coordinators.

Meetings and Trainings September 2026

September 2026

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

Presented by: Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR)

Date: September 2, 2026, and September 3, 2026

Time: 9:00 am – 3:00 pm each day

Click here to register: <https://forms.gle/i6RWZbrCTzryU7w1A>

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

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