



Angela D. Alsobrooks
County Executive

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

February 18, 2021

The Honorable Calvin S. Hawkins, II
Council Chair
Prince George's County Council
County Administration Building
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772

Dear Chair Hawkins:

Enclosed for the County Council's consideration is legislation to re-establish the Human Relations Commission ("HRC") as an independent agency separate and apart from the Office of Community Relations ("OCR").

The Human Relations Commission was established by (CB-1-1972), with the goal of eliminating discrimination and civil infringements for all persons in the County. Between 1972 and 2011, the Human Relations Commission functioned as an independent agency under the Executive Branch. In 2011, the former County Executive issued an Executive Order (42-2011) reorganizing the agency, placing the Human Relations Commission as a division under the Office of Community Relations based upon a need to economize the cost of the administration with consideration to related duties and functions.

In 2021, the duties and functions of the Office of Community Relations and Human Relations Commission are not related. The Office of Community Relations is tasked with bridging government resources, agencies and personnel with the citizens of Prince George's County, by way of being visible, accessible and accountable to all residents. The Human Relations Commission is tasked with investigating discrimination complaints for individuals who work, live or play in Prince George's County; leading anti-human trafficking efforts in the County (CR-74-2013); facilitating non-English language access for all County services (CB-62-2017); managing an immigration deportation defense program (BR-02202018a); and creating initiatives to build positive community and combat hate, bias and violence through community education and outreach. Many of the Human Relations Commission's functions have been legislated by County Council after the reorganization in 2011, as they involve civil and human rights education and enforcement.

As part of the investigative arm, the Human Relations Commission is tasked with conducting thorough fact-finding investigations in the areas of employment, education, law enforcement, housing and residential real estate, commercial real estate and public accommodations. This involves investigations into County agencies, non-profit organizations and private businesses, not only for Prince George's County residents, but also those who work

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or play in our County. To successfully execute this function, it requires a level of confidence and trust that investigators conduct investigations with clean hands, diligence and are viewed as non-biased. Those filing complaints and those accused of violating discrimination laws must see the Human Relations Commission as a place that a fair investigation and fair hearing can be received. This requires independent oversight by a neutral agency that is stand-alone and that does not function under the direction or leadership of another government agency.

Additionally, the Human Relations Commission's budget, although presented with the Office of Community Relations, operates separately. There are no shared cost centers, line items or co-mingling of funds.

The proposed Executive Order does not require any substantive changes to the function, mission or budget of the Human Relations Commission or the Office of Community Relations.

The Council's favorable consideration of this legislation is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact my office or Renée Battle-Brooks, Executive Director, Human Relations Commission, at (301) 780-8241.

Sincerely,



Angela D. Alsobrooks
County Executive

Enclosures