

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE REPORT
2026 Legislative Session

Reference No.: Appt-10-2026
Draft No.: 1
Committee: Government Operations and Fiscal Policy
Date: February 26, 2026
Action: FAV

REPORT:

Committee Vote: Favorable 4-0 (In favor Council Members Burroughs, Adams, Ivey, Oriadha)

The Government Operations and Fiscal Policy Committee met on February 26, 2026, to consider the nomination of Jose Villegas as Director of the Office of Human Rights.

The Office of Human Rights ensures that residents of Prince George's County are protected from unlawful discrimination and have access to fair and equal treatment under local law. The Office of Human Rights enforces the County's Anti-Discrimination Law, Investigates and Resolves Complaints, supports the Human Relations Commission, and Promotes Equal Opportunity and Community Education.

Ms. LaJoia Cannon, Interim Appointment Liaison in the Office of the County Executive, provided an overview of Mr. Villegas's educational and professional background. Ms. Cannon shared that Jose Villegas is under consideration for the Director of the Office of Human Rights. Mr. Villegas has extensive experience within the agency, having served as Deputy Director and Investigation Division Chief, overseeing a \$2.7 million budget and managing complex partnerships with organizations such as the EEOC and University of Maryland Safe Center.

Ms. Cannon further shared that Mr. Villegas held roles as investigator III and Acting Executive Director, leading investigative teams, conducting high-level policy and legal analysis under federal anti-discrimination laws, and managing mediation and conciliation processes. Ms. Cannon highlighted his demonstrated leadership, legal expertise, and commitment to advancing the agency's mission, noting that he is well-positioned to serve as Director with integrity and vision.

Mr. Villegas addressed the Committee, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to serve as Acting Director and nominee for Director of the Office of Human Rights. He highlighted his 21-

year career with the office, progressing from intern to investigator, Division Chief, Deputy Director, and Acting Executive Director, gaining extensive experience in investigations, supervision, and budget oversight.

Mr. Villegas emphasized his commitment to protecting civil rights in employment, housing, and public accommodations, expanding community outreach on human rights issues, and providing interns and young professionals with a pathway to advance within county government. Mr. Villegas concluded by reaffirming his dedication to serving Prince George's County residents with integrity and leadership.

Chair Burroughs asked about funding the labor trafficking unit that had been included in the County budget years ago, noting that they had not seen results from that allocation and inquiring about how such situations are handled.

Mr. Villegas explained that the funds were initially used for public education on labor and human trafficking, as there was limited community awareness at the time. He clarified that actual investigations are conducted by a specialized police unit created under the 2013 Human Trafficking Task Force. If a trafficking situation is reported, the resident should call 311, which routes the case to the designated unit. The Office of Human Rights can also notify the task force and unit commander, who then conduct any necessary investigation and enforcement.

Committee members expressed support for the nomination, noting his dedication to the community and extensive experience within the Office of Human Rights.

The Government Operations and Fiscal Policy Committee voted favorably 4-0 on the appointment of Jose Villegas as Director of the Office of Human Rights.