



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	Caron Watkins Interim Director, Office of Equity & Civil Rights Interim Chief Equity Officer
ANALYST	Zachary Wellman Equity Policy Analyst, Office of Equity & Civil Rights
DATE	November 7, 2024
SUBJECT	OECR Report on Baltimore City Council Bill 24-0568 <i>Community Relations Commission – Powers and Duties – Complaint Period</i>

OECR POSITION: Favorable

SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION

The Office of Equity & Civil Rights (OECR) has reviewed and is herein reporting on City Council Bill 24-0568 – *Community Relations Commission – Powers and Duties – Complaint Period*. This is an ordinance that alters the enabling legislation of the Community Relations Commission.

The bill seeks to accomplish the following:

- Alter the language of the existing statute to require the Community Relations Commission to “resolve” complaints of discrimination, rather than “seek to adjust.”
- Extend the period in which complainants may submit complaints of discrimination from 180 to 300 days following the occurrence of the alleged discrimination.

The bill does this by repealing, amending, and then re-ordaining Article IV, Section 2-4(5) of the Baltimore City Code.

ANALYSIS

In the City of Baltimore, discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, ancestry, sex, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, or marital status is illegal. The Baltimore City Community Relations Commission (CRC) investigates discrimination claims and assists people who have been discriminated against by enforcing the laws that protect them. The CRC combats unlawful discrimination in employment, public accommodation, housing, education, and health and welfare services.

Council Bill 24-0568 aligns the current timeline for which complainants may submit complaints of discrimination with that of State and Federal law. Currently, Baltimore City’s timeline is

significantly shorter than the industry standard. Therefore, this act will have a positive effect on securing equity for Baltimore residents. It will also aid the CRC in fulfilling its duties more thoroughly by limiting instances where the commission is unable to serve residents because of time constraints.

Council Bill 24-0568 will enshrine a more robust safety net for residents' civil rights. By extending the time in which residents may file a complaint with the Community Relations Commission, greater protection against discrimination will be afforded to the residents of Baltimore.

CONCLUSION

The Office of Equity & Civil Rights discerns equitable intent in City Council Bill 24-0568. The OECR is confident that the bill will have a wide-reaching impact in combatting discrimination and strengthening protections against discrimination throughout the city. As such, the office requests a **favorable** committee report on Council Bill 24-0568.

Respectfully Submitted,

Handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of the letters 'CW' in a stylized, cursive font.

Caron Watkins
Interim Director, Office of Equity & Civil Rights