



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	Amber Greene, Chief Equity Officer Director, Office of Equity & Civil Rights
ANALYST	Zachary Wellman, Equity Policy Analyst
CC	Mayor's Office of Government Relations
DATE	06/05/2025
SUBJECT	City Council Bill 25-0020R Informational Hearing – Well being of Gay Men in Baltimore

POSITION: Favorable

BILL SYNOPSIS

The Office of Equity & Civil Rights (OECR) has reviewed and is herein reporting on City Council Bill 25-0020R – Informational Hearing – Informational Hearing – Well being of Gay Men in Baltimore. This is a City Council Resolution that seeks to hold a hearing to provide information on the following:

- Call upon several Baltimore City agencies to testify via a public hearing.
- Request information from those agencies on the services provided to gay residents.
- Request information from those agencies on the general well-being of the gay community in Baltimore.

SUMMARY OF POSITION

The OECR is excited by the opportunity to present the services it provides to gay residents in a public hearing. While the office serves all Baltimoreans, regardless of protected characteristics such as gender identity, we would like to highlight some of the services the OECR provides that address some of the most pressing issues faced by gay men.

The OECR houses the Police Accountability Division, which is composed of the Police Accountability Board (PAB) and the Administrative Charging Committee (ACC). The PAB and ACC were created by Maryland state mandate under the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 (Anton's Law).

The PAB receives all complaints of police misconduct, without limitation, involving the public and refers them to the appropriate law enforcement agency for investigation; however, the PAB

can not currently assign independent investigators to cases. The PAB also meets quarterly with law enforcement agencies to review and make recommendations on policies. It advises the Mayor and City Council on policing matters and appoints civilian members to other important civilian oversight boards. The ACC is a body of five (5) civilian members, including the Chair of the PAB and four other community members, who review the investigations for the complaints filed with the PAB and decide on disciplinary outcomes.

The PAB and ACC exist to ensure trust, safety, and fairness among the gay community of Baltimore when interacting with law enforcement. This is an important component to equity for gay men as, according to an ACLU national survey analyzed in *Policing Progress: Findings from a National Survey of LGBTQ+ People's Experiences* (2024), the ACLU found:

- 11% of Gay respondents report experiencing physical force by police, compared to 7.0% of non-LGBTQ+ respondents.
- 20% of LGBTQ+ respondents report being arrested, compared to 13.6% of non-LGBTQ+ respondents.
- 15% of Gay respondents experienced insulting language by the police as opposed to 9.9% of non-LGBTQ+ respondents.
- 82% of Gay respondents reported being likely to call the police for help, as opposed to 86.9% of non-LGBTQ+ people.

The OECR also houses the Community Relations Commission is the City Agency designated to enforce Article 4 of the Baltimore City Code, which prohibits discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, sex, color, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, and **gender identity or expression**. Prohibited areas of discrimination include employment, public accommodations, education, health and welfare services, and housing.

The CRC receives and investigates discrimination complaints. They have the authority to subpoena information and witnesses, to hold public hearings when conciliation attempts fail, to issue cease and desist orders, and to take unresolved cases into court. The Commission also develops and monitors formally negotiated conciliatory agreements when a violation is found.

The CRC exists to protect the civil rights of Baltimore's gay community and address any discrimination they may face. This is necessary as, according to *Workplace Experiences of Transgender Employees*, a 2024 study by the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law, 45% of cisgender LGBTQ+ respondents report being discriminated against or harassed in the workplace because of their gender identity/sexual orientation.

The work of the OECR to combat discrimination and police misconduct against gay men is particularly critical amid the numerous executive orders of the Trump Presidential Administration, namely Executive Order 14148 - *Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions* and Executive Order 14288 - *Strengthening and Unleashing America's Law Enforcement to Pursue Criminals and Protect Innocent Citizens*.

Executive Order 14148 - *Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions* marks a rollback of protections for gay men in Baltimore. The executive order rescinds the Biden Administration's Executive Order 14075 - *Advancing Equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,*

Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Individuals, which acknowledged federally that gay men face systemic discrimination and barriers in accessing programs and services in America. Executive Order 14075 focused on expanding access to comprehensive healthcare, preventing and addressing homelessness and housing instability; protecting students and educators in educational institutions; explicitly combating so-called “conversion therapy”; and ensuring that LGBTQI+ children did not face discrimination in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems. With its rescission via Trump’s Executive Order 14148, gay men are now more susceptible to homophobic discrimination in the aforementioned areas. As a response, the City of Baltimore must be committed to vehemently opposing this discrimination and protecting the civil rights of lesbian women where the federal government refuses.

Executive Order 14288 - *Strengthening and Unleashing America's Law Enforcement to Pursue Criminals and Protect Innocent Citizens* promotes aggressive policing tactics and the further militarization of local law enforcement agencies while combatting efforts to hold law enforcement officers accused of misconduct accountable. Because of the disparities in the policing of lesbian women as noted above and the Trump Administration’s defiance against police accountability, it is imperative that the City of Baltimore, through the PAB and ACC, guarantee fair, transparent, and accountable policing.

CONCLUSION

The OECR deeply supports initiatives to improve the equity of Baltimore’s gay community and works tirelessly to uphold the civil rights of gay residents in the City. As such, the OECR respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on City Council Bill 25-0015R and is happy to respond to any questions the committee may have.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Greene

Amber Greene
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