

CITY OF BALTIMORE

CATHERINE E. PUGH, Mayor



BOARD OF ETHICS
OF BALTIMORE CITY

LINDA B. "LU" PIERSON, Chair
AVERY AISENSTARK, Director
626 City Hall
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

June 12, 2018

The Honorable President and Members
of the Baltimore City Council
Fourth Floor, City Hall
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
c/o Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary

Re: Council Bill 18-0223 {"Equity Assessment Program"}

You have referred Council Bill 18-0223 to the Ethics Board for its report and comments. As indicated in the Title to Council Bill 18-0223, the bill's purpose is to:

provid[e] for the implementation of an Equity Assessment Program for Baltimore City, to be developed and overseen by the Department of Planning; requir[e] City agencies to assess existing and proposed policies and practices for disparate outcomes based on race, gender, or income and to proactively develop policies, practices, and investments to prevent and redress those disparate outcomes; ... [with] the goal of eliminating structural and institutional racism and other forms of discrimination based on immutable characteristics.

The Ethics Board has reviewed the bill and supports its goals of improving equity throughout City government and ensuring that government decisions and processes are reviewed with an eye toward eliminating disparate outcomes.

The Board notes, however, that it is a small agency with limited staffing and no formal budget and would therefore lack both the expertise and resources to undertake a meaningful equity assessment of its existing and proposed practices and policies as required by this bill without external support. As written, the bill seems to envision that the Department of Planning would provide central coordination of the Citywide assessment effort and offer relevant expertise and assistance to other agencies in conducting the required assessments and developing appropriate responses. So long as this support was provided by the Department of Planning, or another central coordinating entity, the Board believes it could comply with the bills proposed requirements.

The Ethics Board supports approval of this bill to create a centrally managed citywide Equity Assessment Program.

Very truly yours,

Thaddeus Watulak
Deputy Ethics Director

Tel: (410) 396-4730 ☎ Fax: (410) 396-8483