



**Anne Arundel County
Human Relations Commission
2021 ANNUAL REPORT**

**Submitted to the County Executive and the County Council
Pursuant to Article 3, Title 5A, § 3-5A-108(b) of the Anne Arundel County Code on February 22, 2022**

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I. Purpose

The purpose of this report is twofold: to comply with the annual reporting requirement imposed on the Human Relations Commission by § 3-5A-108(b) of the Anne Arundel County Code and to make recommendations under § 3-5a-108(a)(9) and (10) of the Code.

II. Background

The Anne Arundel County Human Relations Commission was originally created by Executive Order as a volunteer advisory body to help fight discrimination in Anne Arundel County. In 2019, the Commission was reconstituted through legislative enactment and is now codified in Article 3, Title 5A of the Anne Arundel County Code. The Human Relations Commission is now tasked with the mandate to work towards the elimination of discrimination and to enforce the County's fair housing law, codified at Article 1, Title 9 of the Anne Arundel County Code. In 2020 an Anne Arundel County charter amendment was passed that made the Human Relations Commission a part of the County Charter.

I. 2021 Accomplishments

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a disproportionate impact on the African American and Latino communities in the county, two of the larger groups that could benefit from the assistance of the Commission. These communities were still forced to focus on the immediate health and economic consequences of the pandemic that posed a threat to their survival in 2021. Understandably, these communities were less focused on seeking help from the Commission. This factor combined with pandemic instituted social gathering limitation has continued to have a significant impact on the Commission's ability to engage in community outreach and help the community understand its authority to enforce the County's fair housing law.

Despite the limitation on its ability to engage with the community, the Human Relations Commission had a number of accomplishments in 2021:

- **Maryland Commission on Civil Rights Fair Housing Training.** Keith Merkley, Education and Outreach Associate for the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights conducted a basic training for the Commission on fair housing legal requirements in Maryland.
- **Creation of Voting Student Commissioner Position.** The Commission successfully advocated for the change in codification of the student member position on the

Commission to full voting status to enhance the ability of the student Commissioner to impact Commission decisions.

- **Addition of Commissioner with Housing Expertise to Commission.** The Commission successfully advocated for an additional Commissioner to enhance the ability of the Commission to address housing discrimination complaints and fair housing issues.
- **Updates to Webpage.** As part of its ongoing outreach efforts to educate, communicate and engage with the community regarding the role of the Commission in enforcing the County’s fair housing law and in combatting discrimination in the County, the Commission has recently translated our housing discrimination complaint form into Spanish and translated our Commission brochure into Spanish. Both translations will soon appear on our webpage.

● **Inquiries, Complaints, and Incident Area**

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to reduce the number of inquiries and complaints made to the Commission. It is likely that fewer incidents of discrimination occurred in the County as COVID- 19 restrictions limited the interaction between people in the County but also likely that the pandemic prevented the reporting of any such incidents. As more people in the County became vaccinated, pandemic restrictions eased and children returned to the classroom, the number of reported incidents began to increase.

Month/Type	Number of Incidents		Incident Area	Number of Incidents
January				
Racial	7		Annapolis	2
Religious	1		Glen Burnie	3
Sexual	1		Hanover	1
			Pasadena	1
			Severna Park	2
Total	9			
February				
Anti-Semitic	1		Annapolis	2

Racial	6		Brooklyn Park	3
Total	7		Glen Burnie	1
March				
Ethnic	1		Odenton	1
Total	1			
April				
Ethnic	1		Brooklyn Park	2
Racial	9		Edgewater	5
			Glen Burnie	1
			Severna Park	2
			Severna Park	4
Total	10			
May				
Ethnic	4		Brooklyn Park	2
Racial	10		Glen Burnie	5
			Harwood	1
			Laurel	2
Total	14		Pasadena	4
June				
Racial	13		Brooklyn Park	2
			Deale	1
			Glen Burnie	4
			Hanover	2
			Laurel	1
			Linthicum	1
			Pasadena	1
Total	13		Shadyside	1
July				
Ethnic	3		Annapolis	1
Racial	8		Brooklyn Park	1
Sexual	1		Edgewater	1
Total	12		Gambrills	1
			Glen Burnie	1

		Laurel	2
		Linthicum	1
		Odenton	1
		Pasadena	2
		Severna Park	1
August			
Ethnic	2	Annapolis	5
Racial	15	Brooklyn Park	2
Total	17	Crofton	1
		Glen Burnie	3
		Hanover	1
		Laurel	1
		Linthicum	3
		Millersville	1
		Odenton	1
		Pasadena	1
		Severn	1
September			
Anti-Semitic	1	Annapolis	5
Ethnic	1	Brooklyn Park	1
Racial	13	Crofton	1
Sexual	3	Glen Burnie	4
Total	18	Hanover	1
		Laurel	1
		Linthicum	1
		Odenton	1
		Pasadena	2
		Severna Park	1
October			
Ethnic	5	Annapolis	3
Racial	14	Arnold	1
Sexual	2	Brooklyn Park	1
Total	21	Crofton	2
		Edgewater	1

		Glen Burnie	3
		Hanover	2
		Laurel	1
		Linthicum	1
		Odenton	1
		Pasadena	5
November			
Anti-Semitic	3	Annapolis	2
Ethnic	1	Crofton	2
Racial	9	Crownsville	1
Sexual	3	Edgewater	2
Total	16	Glen Burnie	4
		Pasadena	4
		Severna Park	1
December			
Anti-Semitic	2	Annapolis	3
Ethnic	3	Brooklyn Park	2
Racial	12	Crofton	2
Total	17	Edgewater	1
		Gambrills	1
		Glen Burnie	3
		Hanover	1
		Linthicum	1
		Odenton	1
		Pasadena	1
		Shadyside	1
Grand Total	155		

III. 2022 Goals

The Commission's 2022 goals include:

- Making better use of Facebook as a marketing/outreach tool

- Make progress creating a General Inquiry Form and survey (of discriminatory experiences) for web page (collect data/analytics re: discrimination incidents in the County)
- Scheduling meetings/panel discussions with allies/community groups to introduce the HRC and our legislative mandate - share resources that we have that are available including inquiry form & survey
 - NAACP
 - CAAL
 - United Black Clergy
 - PFLAG
 - Annapolis Pride
 - Police Districts (Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western)
 - Councilmanic Districts

IV. Recommendations

A. Fund the Human Relations Commission to Comply with Legislative Mandate

In 2019, a watershed moment occurred in Anne Arundel County. For the first time in Anne Arundel County history, a County law, the fair housing law, was passed making it illegal to discriminate against constitutionally protected classes of people. Prior to the enactment of this law, the only recourse a victim of housing discrimination in Anne Arundel County had was to pursue redress through the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights or the U.S. Department of Housing and urban Development. Enacting the fair housing law in Anne Arundel County finally provided residents of Anne Arundel County with the same, long overdue, level of legal protection afforded to the residents of all the other counties in Central Maryland.

To enforce the new fair housing law, the County reconstituted the Commission. The Commission was tasked under § 3-5A-102 of the Code with promoting and enhancing “the ability of all Anne Arundel County residents to pursue their lives free of discrimination” and under § 3-5A-108(a)(1) and (2) with the power to “receive, mediate, and adjudicate complaints of discrimination in housing” and “initiate and investigate matters relating to discrimination in housing.” As an all-volunteer body made up of County residents, the Commission is capable of fulfilling some of its legislated mandate, but not all of it.

The Commission is a critical part of the regulatory scheme devised by the County to enforce the County’s fair housing law and to work towards the elimination of discrimination in the County. This approach to enforcing the fair housing law and fighting discrimination is similar to the approach taken by the other counties in Central Maryland. However, the principal distinction in the approach pursued by the other counties is that they provide the necessary funding and

staffing to support the work of volunteer commissions tasked with similar statutory enforcement responsibilities.

As it currently stands, Anne Arundel County's fair housing law is an unfunded mandate. Therefore, the Commission, predominantly relying on an all-volunteer group of Commissioners, is operating in a less than optimal manner.

As a part of the regulatory scheme created by the County to enforce its fair housing law and to counteract discrimination, the Commission plays a number of critical roles. Among these roles are compliance, imposing penalties for non-compliance and motivating compliance with the law through deterrence. In order to accomplish these roles, it is imperative for the Commission to be active in the County and strive to educate its constituency on the requirements of and their rights under the County's fair housing law. This constituency includes both residents and the housing industry (landlords, property management companies, real estate agents, etc.) of Anne Arundel County. Additionally, the Commission must be proactive in its efforts to advocate for the eradication of discrimination in the County in an era in which discrimination has become commonplace. This discrimination can be overt, but often it includes more subtle and nuanced expressions of bias.

Enacting the Anne Arundel County fair housing law and reconstituting the Commission was a good and necessary first step in ensuring that Anne Arundel County residents could live a life free of discrimination. However, more work needs to be done in order to make this dream a reality. Although the volunteer commissioners are committed to fulfilling the Commission's legislative mandate, as an all-volunteer body of 13 County residents, they cannot fully execute their responsibilities without greater support. Accordingly, the Commission recommends that funding be provided for hiring an Executive Director and an Administrative Assistant to support the work of the commission.

The Commission recommends that the Executive Director of the Human Relations Commission be independent and work closely with the County Director of Diversity Equity and Inclusion. The title of Executive Director is recommended based on a sampling of comparable titles for similar positions in the Central Maryland area:

- Executive Director, Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (State of Maryland)
- Executive Director of Human Relations (Prince George's County)
- Director of Civil Rights & Equity (Baltimore City)
- Director of Human Rights (Montgomery County)
- Director of Human Relations (Frederick County)
- Human Rights Administrator (Howard County)

Research regarding human relations director salaries performed by the Human Relations Officer and previously provided to the County Executive's Office revealed a salary range from \$117,000 to \$177,125. Examples of salaries varied from Baltimore City's Director of Equity & Civil Rights at approximately \$120,000 annual salary to Montgomery County's Director of Human Relations at approximately \$177,125 back in 2018. At a bare minimum, the Commission recommends that funding be provided at similar levels as the County Ethics Commission, for a full time Executive Director (Pay Grade EE-02 - \$67,853 - \$121,151) and an Administrative Assistant (Pay Grade EE-01 - \$37,507 - \$63,756). This funding request is appropriate as both Commissions are now part of the County Charter and both Commissions are tasked with administering and enforcing a County law. The Ethics Commission administers and enforces the County Public Ethics Law and the Human Relations Commission administers and enforces the County Fair Housing Law.

B. Enact County Law Reforming Policing Practices

- HRC met with Chief Awad to discuss police reform
- HRC continues to call for the same reforms that were recommended by the HRC over the summer and posted on the HRC Web Page

C. Enact County Law Requiring Equity Analysis Prior to Enacting New Legislation or Policies

The Human Relations commission continues to support the contributions made by the Joint Commission to Eliminate the Opportunity Gap in its Committee Recommendations report. The Opportunity Gap Commission ("OGC") undertook a year-long process to address the persistent disparity in academic performance between white and Black Students, also known as the opportunity gap. The OGC report acknowledges that the opportunity gap can be attributed to a number of conditions common to the lowest income neighborhoods in the County, including poverty, income inequality, unsafe housing, poor nutrition, and inadequate health care. For black students, structural and systemic racism perpetuates these inequities.

The OGC report notes that the opportunity gap occurs long before students enter the school system, and many of the structural and systemic problems are societal. For this reason, the school system, the county government, community organizations, and county residents must all be part of the solution. The OGC distilled the work of five subcommittees addressing education, systemic racism, discipline, family life, and curriculum into four priority recommendations:

1. Establish and empower an independent coalition of stakeholders, including those with lived experience of the issues, to provide ongoing review and oversight of structural and

systemic racism that contributes to the opportunity gap in AACPS and the County, and to recommend changes to address equity issues in academics and discipline.

2. Engage government agencies and community partners to mitigate the effects of social determinants of education in low-income communities, thereby increasing readiness for school and achievement throughout school.
3. Increase transparency and accountability by improving the public's ability to locate, read, and interpret available reports on progress toward opportunity gap goals.
4. Establish a practice within the Board of Education, the AACPS Central Office, the Anne Arundel County Government, and the Anne Arundel County Council of preparing a documented equity analysis to accompany all proposed policies and decisions.

The Human Relations Commission wholeheartedly agrees with the report's premise that the opportunity gap cannot be addressed without acknowledging that it is affected by multiple systems and worsened by structural and systemic racism. Only by working together can we close the gap. The Human Relations Commission endorses and supports the recommendations made by the Opportunity Gap Report in furtherance of its mandate to eradicate all forms of discrimination in Anne Arundel County. The Human Relations Commission further recommends that the County Council and County Executive enact legislation requiring the preparation of an equity analysis to accompany all proposed County legislation before it is enacted or before policies are implemented.

D. Implement Countywide Workforce Diversity Policy

The Commission continues to recommend that the County formally adopt a policy to increase the recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups employed the County government workforce like the policy of the Anne Arundel County Public Schools. As part of this policy, the County should disclose on a yearly basis demographic data regarding County employees and hiring practices and set hiring goals for achieving a workforce representative of County demographics. This policy can be implemented without the need for legislation and will serve as a concrete demonstration of the County's commitment to fight racism and discrimination.

E. Implement a Minority and Small Business Set Asides Policy

The Commission continues to recommend that the County formally adopt a policy committing to enhancing competitive opportunities for minorities and small business enterprises competing for County contract awards. The Commission supports the County's Minority and Small Business Enterprise (MSBE) program, which was created as a recognition of the strong and diverse business community that represents the broader socio-economic makeup of Anne Arundel County, and the awareness that all citizens can benefit from an effective minority and small business enterprise program. The Commission urges the County to formalize this program into a policy requiring the disclosure, on a yearly basis, of demographic data regarding contract awards to minority and small businesses. This is another policy that can be implemented

without the need for legislation and will serve as a concrete demonstration of the County's commitment to fight racism and discrimination.

F. Create Commission or Committee Against Hate Violence by Executive Order

The Commission continues to recommend that the County Executive create through executive order a Commission or Committee to combat hate bias incidents in the County. The *State of Maryland 2018 Hate Bias Report* issued by the Maryland State Police found that Anne Arundel County reported 78 hate crimes and bias incidents. In doing so, Anne Arundel County earned the ignominy of reporting more hate/bias incidents than any other County in the State of Maryland. The *State of Maryland 2019 Hate Bias Report* found that the County reported 81 hate crimes and bias incidents, the second greatest number in the State of Maryland. This is a serious problem that needs the focused attention of a standalone Committee or Commission.

Hate crimes and bias incidents, unlike other types of discriminatory, racist, or bigoted acts, have a far-reaching social impact. This is because the hate crime or bias incident, whether intentional or not, sends a message to an entire group of people that are not welcome and are not safe in a specific neighborhood, community, school, workplace, or other environment. By Committing a hate crime or bias incident against an individual based on the individual's minority group status, the hate crime or bias incident sends the message that other members of the individual's community should also feel threatened by the attack. Thus, the hate crime or bias incident victimizes not only the individual but also other members of that individual's group. Individuals from the targeted group may thereafter think twice before traveling in, visiting, relocating to or otherwise having anything to do with a particular area where the hate crime or bias incident occurred. To compound the matter, hate crimes and bias incidents also generate a general mistrust and other feelings of ill-will towards the police and other governmental authorities, who are seen as unable to remedy the situation or sympathetic in favor of hate crime/bias incident perpetrators.

Most hate crimes and bias incidents are carried out by otherwise law-abiding people. They are spurred on to act based on hate because of their personal prejudice or disdain for people who are different or whose differences are perceived as a threat and their perception that society sanctions attacks on certain groups in the community. Experts who have studied hate concur that, when it comes to hate crimes, bias incidents and discrimination, apathy is viewed as acceptance by the perpetrators, the victims and the public. The best way to combat this perception that society sanctions attacks on certain groups of people in our communities is by creating a Commission or Committee focused on the task of counteracting hate and bias incidents in the County by working to implement the recommendations made by the Southern Poverty Law Center in their Community Response Guide:

- **Act:** When confronted with acts of hatred, apathy by our community will be interpreted as acceptance by the perpetrators, the public and the victims of hate. This Commission

or Committee would provide leadership and help victims of hate and their respective communities take appropriate action to demonstrate that hate is not tolerated in Anne Arundel County.

- **Join Forces:** This Commission or Committee will connect with allies from churches, schools, clubs, and other civic groups. It will work to create diverse community coalitions including children (where appropriate), police, and the media and gather constructive ideas from everyone on how to respond to hate and bias incidents.
- **Support the Victims:** This Commission or Committee will offer an invitation to connect and provide support to victims of hate and bias incidents through a partnership with the County Police Department. Although support is currently provided to crime victims, when an incident does not arise to the level of a hate crime and is only considered a bias incident no support is currently available to victims.
- **Speak Up:** The Commission or Committee will help expose and denounce hate crimes and bias incidents on behalf of the County government and the residents of Anne Arundel County.
- **Educate the Community:** This Commission or Committee will offer an invitation to connect and provide support to victims of hate and bias incidents through a partnership with the County Police Department. Although support is currently provided to crime victims, when an incident does not arise to the level of a hate crime and is only considered a bias incident no support is currently available to victims.
- **Create an Alternative:** In the event that a hate group plans to rally in Anne Arundel County, the commission or Committee would organize a counter demonstration against the hate all the while avoiding direct confrontation with participants in the hate rally.
- **Galvanize the Support of Local Elected Officials and Community Leaders:** The commission or Committee would work to build relationships with local leaders that could be mobilized to publicly oppose hate/bias incidents in the community when they occur.
- **Stay Engaged:** The Commission or Committee would work to promote acceptance of people with differences and address bias before another hate crim can occur.
- **Teach Acceptance:** The Commission or Committee would organize, promote, and lead educational initiatives that each tolerance and acceptance in order to combat bias and stereotypes that are too frequently learned at home.
- **Dig Deeper:** The Committee or Commission would explore further opportunities to education and combat biases and stereotypes and would look for opportunities to join the fight to dismantle systemic racism, bigotry and bias.

Creating a Committee or Commission focused on counteracting hate crimes and bias incidents in Anne Arundel County will send a strong message to hate groups and individuals who are inclined to act on their personal prejudice based on a disdain or fear of those who are different, that the County does not sanction intolerance.

G. Provide Support for the Commission to Collect Data from County Residents Regarding their Personal Experiences Regarding Discrimination

The large number of hate/bias incidents reported in Anne Arundel County is evidence that individuals who are part of minority groups in the County are victims of discriminatory animus. We know from anecdotal evidence collected by community groups that residents of Anne Arundel County complain with too much regularity of having their civil rights violated. However, no one in the County is aware of the full extent of the malevolent behavior motivated by hate, bias and bigotry targeted at individuals in a minority group status or legally protected classes.

Central to the legislatively mandated mission of the Commission is that it “promote and enhance the ability of all Anne Arundel County residents to pursue their lives free of discrimination.” Further, the Commission is empowered to “collect, research, assemble, analyze, and disseminate data . . . to assist in the elimination of discrimination”. However, the Commission does not possess the requisite expertise or ability to meaningfully collect the data or analytics that are necessary to fully understand the extent to which unlawful discrimination is a problem in Anne Arundel County. Recently the Commission has had discussions with County data experts to find ways to display more data for the Commission and the public to review and analyze.

I. Commission Membership

- Oluwatosin Agboola (November 2019 - Present)
Recommended by Council Member Lacey (District 1)
- Lakisha Hatcher (October 2020 – Present)
Recommended by Council Member Pickard (District 2)
- Faye Gaskin (November 2019 - Present)
Recommended by Council Member Volke (District 3)
- Eugene Peterson (November 2019 – Present)
Recommended by Council Member Pruski (District 4)
Chair (June 2, 2021 to present). Recommended by County Executive Pittman
- Khaled Sayed (November 2019 – Present)

Recommended by Council Member Fiedler (District 5)

- Katy Laurel Edwards (July 22, 2021 – November 17, 2023)
Recommended by Council Member Rodvien (District 6)
- Jikaela Call (June 23 - 2021 - November 17 2024)
Recommended by Council Member Haire (District 7)
- Marc Apter (November 2019 - Present)
Recommended by County Executive Pittman
- Mary Dadone (November 2019 - Present)
Recommended by County Executive Pittman
- Tara Kim Recommended by County Executive Pittman
- Erin Shearman Karpewicz
Recommended by County Executive Pittman
- Joseph Clapsaddle (December 2020 - Present)
Recommended by County Executive Pittman
- Laura Languidey Farinas (October 6 - 2021 - November17 2024)
Recommended by County Executive Pittman
- Asha Smith (July 22 - 2021 - Present)
Ex-Officio and Human Relations Officer

