

# State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

“Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.”



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## Maryland Commission on Civil Rights Statement Celebrating LGBTQ+ Pride Month

The Board of Commissioners and the Staff of the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights celebrates Pride Month, standing as allies and in support of the civil rights of the LGBTQ+ community this, and every, month. Pride Month is an opportunity to celebrate, raise awareness, and participate in events that recognize the LGBTQ+ community.

As so eloquently offered by the National Park Service “civil rights are understood as freedoms of life, safety, thought and conscience, speech, expression, the press, assembly, and movement as well as the right to privacy and protection from discrimination.”<sup>1</sup> An equitable society must guarantee these aforementioned civil and human rights.

The LGBTQ+ community has experienced victories and losses. Within the past year, the United States Supreme Court has affirmed that the protections of Title VII extend to gender identity and sexual orientation. The Court has recently held, in *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia*, that municipal policies requiring non-discrimination from contractors providing public services, when exceptions are allowed, must accommodate religious beliefs.<sup>2</sup> We understand that fifty or more laws have been proposed that protect or advance the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. We also understand that one hundred or more laws across thirty-three states have been proposed that limit the rights of transgender persons.<sup>3</sup> This month, we remembered those lost in the Pulse massacre five years ago.

As Marylanders, we have been leaders in standing with our LGBTQ+ communities. Since 2001, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation has been illegal. In 2012, persons of the same sex have been able to marry the persons they love. In 2018, Maryland banned conversion therapy on minors. The legal defense for violence because of fear, panic, or temporary insanity from being “hit-on” by a person of the same sex will be abolished. We must continue to do better!

<sup>1</sup> Springate, Megan E. (2016). *LGBTQ America: A theme study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History*. National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

<sup>2</sup> *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia*, No. 19-123

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from: <https://freedomforallamericans.org/legislative-tracker/nondiscrimination-bills/>

Progress has been achieved in Maryland. Yet the arc of justice must continuously bend towards supporting all historically excluded communities, often while combating against intolerance. In Maryland, LGBTQ+ communities “continue to face significant and disturbing barriers in almost every facet of their lives, including public health, employment, community safety and housing.”<sup>4</sup> Maryland must identify and address disparities.

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights will host a virtual event on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021, from 12:00pm to 2:00pm titled “A Hidden Health Crisis: Health Disparities facing the LGBT Community”. **You can register for free at [mccr.events/LGBTQHealth](https://mccr.events/LGBTQHealth).** We hope you can join us and please share with others in your community.

As Marylanders, and as a Commission, we must continue to support the civil rights of the LGBTQ+ community.

*On behalf of the Board of Commissioners and the Staff  
of the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights*  
Gary C. Norman, J.D., L.L.M., Chairperson  
Alvin O. Gillard, Executive Director

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<sup>4</sup> Agostini, M. Saida, et al (December 2018). *Pushing Back: A Blue Print for Change. Lessons Learned from the 2016 Needs Assessment of LGBTQ Marylanders*. Free State Justice.