

The current Commission consists of nine members appointed by the Governor with the advise and consent of the Senate for six-year terms. The Commission designates one of its members as Chairperson. In the appointment of Commission members, consideration is given to representation from all areas of the State. A staff, currently consisting of 70 authorized positions, is employed to perform a variety of Commission activities.

The Commission formulates general policy and direction, acts upon programs and administrative proposals, conducts public meetings, and promotes Commission community presence and assistance. It is authorized to eliminate discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religious creed, sex, marital status, physical handicap, mental handicap, or age. The Commission is empowered to administer and enforce the Maryland Public Accommodations Law, Discrimination in Housing Law, and the Fair Employment Practices Law. By Chapter 153, Acts of 1969, the Commission was empowered to initiate complaints and investigate complaints of discrimination in State agencies. Through its staff, the Commission receives, investigates, and conciliates complaints that allege violation of these laws. The Commission has the power to conduct public hearings, administer oaths, issue subpoenas, and to compel the attendance, the testimony of witnesses, the production of books, papers, records, and documents relevant or necessary for proceeding under these laws and to dismiss complaints where evidence shows an absence of discriminatory acts or issue a cease and desist order if evidence shows that a respondent has engaged in a discriminatory act.

The Commission has the authority and power to make such surveys and studies concerning human relations, conditions, and problems as it may determine, and to promote in every way possible the betterment of human relations. The Commission is further directed to promote in every way possible the betterment of interracial relations, submit legislative and administrative recommendations to the Governor in the field of human relations, and to oversee compliance with the Code of Fair Practices as promulgated by the Governor.

The 1974 General Assembly made major amendments to the law. Discrimination in housing on the basis of marital status and sex was prohibited, and exceptions were provided with respect to the application of certain provisions in the Discrimination in Housing subtitle (Chapter 848). A second bill provided that it is unlawful for persons and organizations to discriminate in

certain employment practices against persons who are mentally or physically handicapped, to prohibit certain discriminatory activities against the physically or mentally handicapped in housing or obtaining loans on dwellings, and to make technical corrections to the language (Chapter 601). A parallel bill prohibited discriminatory activities in public accommodations, employment, and housing because of marital status or physical or mental handicaps relating generally to discrimination based on marital status or physical or mental handicaps and clarifying the language (Chapter 875).

By Chapter 419, Acts of 1975, the Commission may seek certain types of court relief; namely, a temporary injunction if the Commission believes that appropriate civil action is necessary to preserve the status of the parties or to prevent irreparable harm. Chapter 333, Acts of 1975, provides that it is not an unlawful employment practice for an employer to establish standards concerning an employee's dress and grooming if the standards are directly related to the nature of the employment.

By Chapters 937, 907, and 706, Acts of 1977, a number of important changes in the law were mandated. By Chapter 937, Acts of 1977, the legislature reduced the size of the Commission from 12 members to 9, empowered the Commission to designate its own Chairperson, and abolished the previous \$16,000 salary for the Chairperson. The new legislation continues the appointment of the Executive Director by the Governor, but provides that he must choose from a list of five names submitted by the Commission and also provides for the Executive Director's removal by the Governor upon recommendation of two thirds of the members of the Commission. The power of appointment and removal of the Deputy Director and the General Counsel has been transferred from the Governor to the Executive Director with approval by the majority of the Commission members. The law also authorizes the appointment of hearing examiners to hear cases under the Human Relations law, and provides for an appeal from the decisions of the hearing examiner to the Commission. Finally, the new legislation expands the Commission's power to order appropriate relief for victims of discrimination by empowering the Commission to award monetary relief, limited to two years back pay, to victims of employment discrimination.

In addition to these changes in MCHR's structure, procedures, and authority, by Chapter 907, Acts of 1977, employers are required to treat disabilities caused or contributed to by pregnancy