

The Commission consists of twelve members appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate for six-year terms. The Governor designates the Chairman of the Commission and appoints the Executive Director, the Deputy Director and the General Counsel. One member must represent Caroline, Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's or Talbot counties; one member must represent Dorchester, Wicomico, Worcester, or Somerset counties; three members must represent Baltimore City; one member must represent Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, Howard, Montgomery or Washington counties; one member must be from Montgomery County; two members must be from Baltimore County; two members must represent Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles or St. Mary's counties; and two members must reside in Prince George's County.

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. It is authorized to eliminate discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religious creed, sex or age. 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 Commission is empowered to administer and enforce the Maryland Public Accommodations Law, Discrimination in Financing 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.

Chapter 413, Acts of 1970 added the office of Deputy Director, broadened the prohibition against sex discrimination in employment, transferred enforcement of prohibition against age discrimination in employment to the Commission on Human Relations, modified confidentiality provisions, simplified the Commissioner complaint procedure, and made several other changes, including one making it clear that political subdivisions may also enact human relations legislation, but in doing so, not weakening the State law.

By Chapter 324, Acts of 1971, the General Assembly enacted major legislation, to become effective after July 1, 1971, providing the Commission with enforcement powers regarding Discrimination In Housing. This law also broadened the Public Accommodations Law to include all businesses licensed by the State under Article 41, Section 221 of the Annotated Code. This provision included a prohibition against sexual discrimination by these licensees.

The Commission formulates general policy and direction, acts upon programs and administrative proposals, conducts public meetings and promotes Commission community presence and assistance. Through its staff, the Commission receives, investigates, and mediates complaints which 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 submits an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly together with recommendations, if any, for additional legislation (Code 1957, 1968 Repl. Vol., 1970 Supp., Art. 49B, secs. 1-3, 11-28).