



## Maryland Commission on Human Relations

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### Statement on behalf of Norman I. Gelman, Chairman of the Maryland Commission on Human Relations – January 26, 2010

I regret that another commitment prevents me from attending today's appropriations hearing. But I believe I owe you my views on the present situation facing MCHR.

I told you last year that we had our backs to the wall in terms of personnel and other resources. As you will see from our latest Annual Report, MCHR's staff did remarkably well under the circumstances. We met our obligations under the laws we administer and did so with an outstanding record.

I need to call your attention, however, to the fact that we may not fare as well during the coming year. Part of our funding for handling cases of employment discrimination comes from a work-sharing agreement with the federal Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. We have had such agreements with the EEOC for at least 30 years, and MCHR has never failed to fulfill its contract.

During this past spring, the EEOC announced a 16 percent across-the-board reduction in contracts for all state and local Fair Employment Practices Agencies, of which MCHR is one. We were given two different reasons for the cutbacks. One was that the FEPAs hadn't done an effective job of lobbying for funds. The second was that the FEPAs, as a whole, weren't doing a very good job.

Since MCHR's record with the EEOC has been exemplary, we protested this decision to the EEOC, to the federal Office of Management and Budget and to the Congressional Committees that handle the EEOC's budget. So we've certainly lobbied.

There remains a chance that because of these efforts wiser heads will prevail and the EEOC decision of last spring will be rescinded. We certainly hope so. But if it is not, MCHR will suffer, and as a result it will take longer to process cases, and not just employment cases.

We are often told by complainants that "justice delayed is justice denied." Since the interval between a filing with MCHR and completion of an investigation has been short and growing shorter, those complaints have not been justified. However, if our EEOC funding is reduced, complainants will have legitimate grounds for concern by this time next year.

We hope our efforts will stave off the reduction in funds, but I feel it is important to warn you in advance of what may happen.

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