



# NEWS RELEASE

## HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## **Councilwoman Rigby Files Legislation to Create Local Whistleblower Protections**

*Ellicott City, MD (February 3, 2020)* – Howard County Councilwoman Christiana Rigby will introduce legislation at tonight's legislative session that will create and strengthen local whistleblower protections in Howard County. Council Bill 7-2020 is designed to protect county employees who make disclosures to the County Auditor about workplace violations. This legislation will be co-sponsored by Councilmembers Opel Jones, Deb Jung, and Liz Walsh.

Currently, if a Howard County employee makes a whistleblower complaint about another county employee, there are no direct provisions in the Howard County Code that protect that whistleblower from retaliation. Council Bill 7-2020 addresses this gap in County law by laying out the grounds for a whistleblower complaint and prohibiting any threat or retaliation against employees that make a disclosure. While this has generally been the practice in Howard County, codifying this process provides clarity and additional legal protections not previously outlined.

"At a time when we have witnessed federal whistleblowers under repeated attack, this legislation reaffirms our commitment to public trust in Howard County," said Councilwoman Rigby. "When an employee is aware of improper conduct, they deserve the right to make their complaint without fear of threat or retaliation."

"This legislation codifies essential protections for employees who disclose improper conduct or violations in the workplace," said Howard County Executive Calvin Ball. "As trust in the federal government continues to deteriorate, I remain committed to keeping Howard County Government as a national model of transparency and employee safety."

The federal government of the United States, Maryland state government, and numerous local municipalities have passed and strengthened whistleblower protections for public employees. Recently, the issue of whistleblower protections has been challenged numerous times at the federal level, highlighting the vital importance of maintaining transparency and accountability at all levels of government.

"I fully support whistleblower protections for county employees. As a former federal government employee, I understand the importance of protecting the rights of individuals who report workplace violations," said Councilman Opel Jones. "No employee should fear retaliation for disclosing professional concerns. This council bill is essential to foster government accountability."

“When passed, CB7 will grant County employees definitive protections for their good faith reports of illegal conduct or abuse of authority by County officers, co-workers or contractors, or of gross waste of County funds,” said Council Vice-Chair Liz Walsh. “Any employee with knowledge of such a breach of the public trust should be encouraged to make a confidential complaint to the County Auditor.”

The proposed legislation was pre-filed on January 23, 2020 and will be introduced at the Council’s legislative session on Monday, February 3, 2020. Testimony will be accepted at the legislative public hearing on Tuesday, February 18, 2020. Howard County residents can sign up to testify after February 3 by visiting <https://apps.howardcountymd.gov/otestimony/>. If you would like to submit your testimony electronically, please email [councilmail@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:councilmail@howardcountymd.gov).

To read CB7-2020, visit <https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/Legislation>.

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