



# NEWS RELEASE

## HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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### **Councilmembers Jones and Rigby Announce that Racial Equity Task Force Advances in Howard County**

*Ellicott City, MD (October 6, 2020)* – On October 5, 2020, the Howard County Council voted to establish a Racial Equity Task Force for Howard County, in 4-1 vote. This legislation ([CR142-2020](#)) was introduced by Councilmembers Opel Jones and Christiana Rigby and creates the county's first-ever Racial Equity Task Force, charged with recommending legislation to the County Council to address racial disparities and inequities in Howard County.

The Racial Equity Task Force assembles over 60 experts, community leaders, students, and activists to identify and evaluate actions that the County Council can pursue to advance racial equity. The Task Force members will be placed among six policy subgroups that will focus on racial equity in personal and public safety, land-use and housing policy, economic and workforce development, public health and environmental policy, education, and legislative processes.

"I am incredibly excited that Council Resolution 142-2020 was approved during our Legislative Session," said Councilman Opel Jones. "Now the real work begins once the Racial Equity Task Force meets. I look forward to reviewing the legislative recommendations of each subgroup, tackling socio-injustices, and existing disparities for those in our most vulnerable communities."

"I am glad that the County Council is taking this opportunity to advance the Racial Equity Task Force for Howard County, and I am so grateful for the community voices and leaders that have voiced their support for this effort," said Councilwoman Rigby. "I look forward to receiving the legislative recommendations of the Task Force next summer and working to make Howard County a more equitable place to live for all residents."

The Racial Equity Task Force will identify local legislative recommendations to the County Council to reduce racial disparities and inequities in Howard County. To accomplish this goal, Councilmembers Jones and Rigby have partnered with the Horizon Foundation to procure a joint facilitator to guide and assist the Task Force through this process.

“The passage of this bill illustrates Howard County’s commitment to creating, and sustaining, a more equitable, viable and healthy place to live for its residents,” said Nikki Highsmith Vernick, President and CEO of the Horizon Foundation. “The Horizon Foundation is proud to partner with the Howard County Council to bring real change through listening to residents and creating real opportunity for policy change. We are grateful and hopeful for great things to come!”

The Racial Equity Task Force is expected to convene in November 2020 and will meet through July 2021, delivering its final report in August 2021 to the Howard County Council. During this period, the Task Force will be meeting regularly and holding several community forums, which will be advertised to the public. Jones and Rigby encourage advocates and community members to receive updates by emailing the Councilmembers at [ojones@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:ojones@howardcountymd.gov) and [crigby@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:crigby@howardcountymd.gov) or by texting *HOCOEQUITY* to 22828.

CR142-2020 was pre-filed on August 27, 2020, introduced at the Council’s legislative session on Tuesday, September 8, 2020, and voted on at the Council’s legislative session on Monday, October 5, 2020. To read the legislation, please visit <https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/Legislation>.

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