

## **ORDINANCE O-5-17 AND RESOLUTION R-7-17**

First and foremost, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to my colleague, and fellow barrister, Alderman Jared Littmann, for proposing a piece of legislation that took foresight and yes, courage—and for bringing it to the forefront of our City. In these days and times of “discomfort” and uncertainty, nevertheless, Alderman Littmann has made all of us think beyond ourselves.

Here and now, I would like to make this perfectly clear: It is not my intention whatsoever, and in no way shape or form, do the 2 pieces of legislation that I am proposing, run contrary to Alderman Littman’s and to my—to our—overall mission, which is: To ensure equal protection under the law for all, under our U.S. Constitution. Simply put: It’s just another way of how 2 (or maybe even 3) legal minds approach an important issue.

Based upon the many e-mails and correspondence that I have received over the past several weeks from many of you, I would suspect that many persons in the community believe that I have had very little, or even no experience, working with or interacting with the immigrant community. And that I don’t even care about the immigrant community. Nothing could be further from the truth. So based upon these e-mails and correspondence, I feel compelled to directly respond, here, to the communication that I have received. And I would be derelict in my duties if I allowed this opportunity to respond pass me by.

After prosecuting juvenile, then physical child abuse and companion domestic violence cases for over 20 years, upon my retirement as a prosecutor and supervisor in the Baltimore City State’s Attorney’s Office in 2004, two months later, I was hired full-time as the Program Manager for the Office of Minority Health with the Anne Arundel County Department of Health. There, for 1 year, I supervised and worked with an extremely dedicated, passionate, and skilled staff of five—3 Latinos, 1 Asian, and 1 African-American. Our job was to make sure that we got the health messages out to the Latino community, the Asian community, and the African-American community. To this end, my staff and I worked directly and very closely with the many churches and Pastors in Annapolis and throughout Anne Arundel County, as well as with the Latino and Asian businesses, and where these organizations hosted many of our events and activities. The highlight of our Department’s work was the first ever County-wide Immigration Forum that my Office hosted in 2005, which was verbally acknowledged and recognized as unprecedented—specifically, in the valuable and diverse information that was provided, and in the overwhelming number of respondents and participants.

For over 11 years, I have been employed full-time with Anne Arundel County Public Schools as the School and Community Relations and Outreach Specialist, initially assigned to the Central Office. For the first 6 ½ years, I was assigned to the Office of Equity Assurance and Human Relations, and then to the Office of School Performance, where current Superintendent Dr. George Arlotto was my immediate supervisor, and then onto the Office of School and Family Partnerships still at the Central Office. There, I worked on several projects within the ESOL or ELL Program—in other words, the English Speakers of Other Languages or English Language Learners programs. Working on these events and programs, with the ESOL School Liaisons and Specialists, who are based at the schools—this work simply became an extension of the work that I had been doing at the County Health Department.

Since June 2012, I have been assigned full-time to the Frank Hebron-Harman Elementary School, which is located in West County, right around the corner from the Maryland Live! Casino, doing the same work that I did at the schools system's Central Office. At our school, we have 800 students and a staff of approximately 100. Our school is extremely diverse. Out of our 800 elementary school students, 30 languages are spoken either by our students or within their households. Out of the 125+ schools in our County, it is my understanding that we are the most diverse school in the County. And I interact with these students and/or members of their households on a daily basis.

Currently, at my school, I am working on 3 projects with another community that I have never worked with before—namely, the Middle Eastern community, or more accurately, the “South Asian” community. We are jointly working on a “Parent Resource Night” in March, a “Taste of Asia” Family Learning Night in May, and a “Mom’s Group” scheduled to begin for the 2017-18 school year. Needless to say, I have learned a lot over the past several months working with this school staff member who is Muslim from Pakistan.

Additionally, in Ward 3, when Ms. Karen Cline became the new Executive Director of the Center of Help, or Centro de Ayuda, in February 2016, about 2 months later, we had a very productive first meeting for 2 hours. Since then, I have communicated with her on at least a weekly basis.

And most recently on December 22, 2016, in City Hall, Ms. Roxana Rodriguez, our City’s Hispanic Community Services Specialist—she and I chatted briefly but very productively about the resources and strategies that are available, for the purpose of assisting our Latino residents. I offered to her my help in any way that she sees fit.

Moreover, Ward 3, the ward that I represent, has a growing immigrant and Latino population.

Although I would not be considered an “immigrant” under any of these pieces of legislation, as you can readily see, I have had a variety of experiences working with or interacting with the immigrant community, consistently and intimately, for over 12 years.

Even though I am an attorney, I recognize the fact that this area of the law, which requires the crafting of a Constitutionally sound piece of legislation, is not my forte. So at this point, I harkened back to what my Dad first told me about a friend of ours. Dr. Aris T. Allen, now deceased, was our family physician, as well as a member of the Maryland Legislature, and he was selected by the President to serve in a top post in the federal government, which was unprecedented at the time. And Route 665 here in Annapolis is named in Dr. Allen’s honor. My Dad often quoted what Dr. Allen once said: “If you don’t know something, ask someone who knows more about it than you do.” I always took that as being great advice.

This body voted unanimously for Mr. Michael G. Leahy to serve as our City Attorney—a position, many years ago, that was offered to me, and which I respectfully declined. (I am well aware of my own limitations.)

Upon reviewing Mr. Leahy’s extensive resume, it was obvious to me, that a person who is “a legal professional with significant experience as a senior executive, attorney, regulator, and policy maker, with a solid track record of implementing practical solutions to complex financial, operational, and regulatory questions for clients, including individuals, local governments, and Fortune 500 companies” is certainly qualified and capable of drafting a piece of legislation that is Constitutionally sound, as well as developing and articulating legal arguments in support thereof. Moreover, Mr. Leahy is much better equipped to do this than anyone of us sitting up here on this dais. So in this light, I took Dr. Allen’s sage advice: I asked Mr. Leahy to draft a piece of legislation that is Constitutionally sound, and whereby legal arguments can support it.

Admittedly, Mr. Leahy and I don’t always agree. But that’s truly the nature and the essence of the law.

After reviewing Alderman Littmann's legislation, and based upon my variety of experiences working with and interacting with the immigrant community consistently for over 12 years—namely, Latino, Asian, and now South Asian—I sincerely believed that we could take this legislation even further. Nevertheless, as an attorney, I knew that I needed to recognize and be cognizant of the current climate of our country, and acknowledge the rapid and unprecedented decisions that are being made by the new administration. And critically looking at this from a practical standpoint, we certainly don't want to end up wasting our City's time and vital and limited resources in unnecessarily having to defend something that we should not have to, but must, in order to gain or maintain any benefits that are rightfully ours. As I see it, I don't want to have to be put in the position of paying for outside legal counsel (which is what it will come down to)—compromising our City's resources—when we will need our City's resources to address possible and/or probable and/or likely matters in the near future, such as infrastructure needs and flood mitigation downtown in Ward 1, road repairs in Admiral Heights in Ward 2, beautiful and additional park amenities in Kingsport in Ward 4, summertime recreational opportunities for our children at the Pip Moyer Recreation Center in Ward 5, new sidewalks on Barbud Lane in Ward 6, traffic and safety studies developed in Ward 7, and public safety concerns in Ward 8. So I realized that any legislation proposed needed to be Constitutionally sound.

Clearly the Resolution that I asked Mr. Leahy to draft was as a result of my extensive work with the immigrant communities over the past 12 ½ years. I immediately recognized a need beyond the Ordinance. I suggested that no more than 9 members serve on the Equal Protection Commission. Without question, my first choice to lead the Commission as Chair is Mr. Marc Rodriguez—a no brainer. And my suggestion to serve as the Co-Chair likewise is a no brainer—Ms. Roxana Rodriguez. The Resolution provides that the Mayor and the City Council receive written quarterly reports from the Commission, publicly submitted, that monitor and ensure the "extending of equal rights and protections to all individuals—specifically, recognizing and publicly reporting to the Mayor and City Council, on a quarterly basis, the culturally diverse contributions of foreign-born residents to our City's social, academic, religious, cultural, and economic life in Annapolis, as well as reporting to the Mayor and City Council on any pertinent Human Resources matters/issues in general" (of course, not violating any personnel/privacy rights). And I am very comfortable with using this, Alderman Littmann's original language, as the foundation for the work of this Commission.

I can envision the other 7 remaining Commission members—all of whom I have interacted with or worked with professionally on some level—namely, in County government, Ms. Maria Casasco; with

the County Health Department, Mr. Carlos Camino; from our City's Police Department, Mr. Joe Hudson, who has assisted Ward 3 greatly; with the Center of Help, their Executive Director Ms. Karen Cline; with Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Ms. Monica Lopez; a local Pastor; and a person savvy within the Human Resources arena. I can vouch for each one of these persons on a personal level—their professionalism and their ability to work together as a team. This team covers: "social, academic, religious, cultural, and economic life in Annapolis" for our immigrant residents—the language that Alderman Littmann uses in his original legislation.

With this Ordinance, O-5-17, and its companion Resolution, R-5-17, we would be satisfying all parties and interests. Specifically, the Resolution provides us with a mechanism that allows us to have a consistent and a public awareness on the progress of our immigrant community—a direct "pulse" on the community—and an opportunity to shape a community in the public arena, along with addressing other issues that many of you raised in your e-mails to me. Yes, I listened, and I heard you.

Mr. Mayor and Members of the City Council: I invite your support of these 2 pieces of legislation.

Thank you very much for your consideration.