Protected Classes and Their Definitions

Applicable to Maryland jurisdictions, updated August 2021.

Federal

* **Color:** Pertaining to a person’s skin color
* **Familial Status:** Families in which one or more children under 18 live with: a parent; a person who has legal custody of the child or children; or the designee of the parent or legal custodian, with the parent or custodian’s written permission.  Familial status protection also applies to pregnant women and anyone securing legal custody of a child under 18.
* **National Origin:** Refers to country of birth.
* **Physical or Mental Disability:**In reference to you or someone close to you who: has a physical or mental disability (including hearing, mobility and visual impairments, chronic alcoholism, chronic mental illness, AIDS, AIDS-related Complex, and mental retardation) that substantially limits one or more major life activities; has a record of such a disability; or is regarded as having such a disability.
* **Race:** Categories of physical characteristics and/or genetic groupings of human populations
* **Religion:** Participation with one of the world’s structured religions; one’s spiritual beliefs; inference of religion by place of worship.
* **Sex:** Male or female. \*including sexual orientation and gender identity

Maryland

Includes all federal protections listed above PLUS the following:

* **Marital Status:**The state of being single, married, separated, divorced, or widowed.
* **Sexual Orientation:**The identification of an individual as to male or female homosexuality, heterosexuality, or bisexuality.
* **Gender Identity:** A person’s consistent and sincere expression of gender-related identity based on appearance, expression or behavior, regardless of the person’s assigned sex at birth.
* **Source of Income:**(Effective 10/1/2020) Any lawful source of money that is paid to or for the benefit of a renter or buyer of housing and includes grants, government assistance, alimony, child support, pensions, annuities, legal gifts, or investment earnings.

Local/Counties

Includes all federal and state protections listed above PLUS the following:

* **Age:** Generally referring to adults 18 yrs & over. (Baltimore City, Cambridge, Hagerstown, Rockville; Baltimore, Harford, Howard, Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties)
* **Ancestry:**Line of decent. (Baltimore City, Cambridge, Rockville and Montgomery County)
* **Creed:** A person’s beliefs; also, a summary of principals or opinions to which someone professes or adheres. (Cambridge, Rockville; Baltimore, Harford, Howard and Montgomery Counties
* **Family Responsibility:**Refers to decisions based on an assumption of a person’s care giving responsibilities, either childcare or care of another family member. (Montgomery County)
* **Lawful Income:**See below, ‘Source of Income’. (City of Annapolis)
* **Occupation:** The principal lawful activity of one’s life, generally including students, welfare recipients and retired persons. (Harford, Howard and Prince George’s Counties)
* **Personal Appearance:** The outward appearance of any person, irrespective of sex, with regard to hair style, facial hair, physical characteristics or manner of dress. Such term shall not relate to the requirement of cleanliness, uniforms or prescribed attire when uniformly applied for admittance to a public accommodation or to a class of employees for a customary or reasonable business. (Harford, Howard and Prince George’s Counties)
* **Political Opinion:** The opinion of persons relating to government, the conduct of government, political parties, candidates for election or elected office-holders. (Harford, Howard and Prince George’s Counties)
* **Presence of Children:** Households that include the temporary custody or permanent occupancy of persons under the age of 18 years. (Rockville and Montgomery Co.)

Reporting Violations

Housing Discrimination

If you feel that you’ve been a victim of housing discrimination contact the [Maryland Commission on Civil Rights](http://mccr.maryland.gov/Intake.html) to file a complaint

Fair Housing Violiation

If a REALTOR® has been involved in a fair housing violation, you may file a complaint with the [Maryland Real Estate Commission](http://www.dllr.state.md.us/license/mrec/mreccomp.shtml).