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PRESS RELEASE

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Attorney General Brown Announces Appointment of Respected Civil Rights Leader Jonathan M. Smith as Chief of New Civil Rights Division

First-of-Its-Kind Division in Maryland Will Enforce Federal and State Civil Rights Laws

BALTIMORE, MD (September 13, 2023) – The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) announced today that Maryland Attorney General Anthony G. Brown has selected Jonathan M. Smith to serve as Chief of the newly created Civil Rights Division. Smith is a well-respected legal figure in civil rights, with a strong trajectory of work at the frontlines of justice, equity, and equality on both local and national stages.



For the past seven years, Smith served as Executive Director of the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, a non-profit law firm, addressing racial and economic injustice related to prisoners' rights, housing, employment, education, disability, police misconduct, and immigrants and refugees.

In early 2023, Smith became a Senior Special Counsel at the organization, focusing on cases and projects related to law enforcement and incarceration reform to reduce the impact of the criminal legal system on communities of color and people living in poverty and to improve public safety. Since 2017, Smith has served as a criminal legal system expert involving law enforcement throughout the country.

Smith was the Chief of the Special Litigation Section of the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice from 2010 to 2015. Prior to his government service, Smith was the Executive Director of the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia, the Public Justice Center in Baltimore, Maryland, and the D.C. Prisoners' Legal Services Project. In each of these positions, in addition to providing program leadership, he has handled individual, class action, and impact litigation and engaged in legislative advocacy and in institutional reform efforts.

“Jon Smith has the experience, the passion, and the commitment to lead the extraordinarily critical work to be performed by our new Civil Rights Division,” **said Attorney General Brown.** “His record of service reflects the highest level of skill and decades of dedication to the protection of civil rights. Jon will be responsible for ensuring that, regardless of who you are, who you love, or where you live, the Attorney General’s Office enforces the law and protects civil rights for all Marylanders.”

“The new Civil Rights Division here at the Maryland OAG will play a critical role in ensuring equal opportunity for all Marylanders,” **said newly named Chief of Division, Jonathan Smith.** “I am proud to join the office to help Attorney General Brown fight discrimination and work for greater equity and justice, and I look forward to working with all critical partners – within the State government and in our communities – in this effort.”

The Civil Rights Division of the Maryland Office of Attorney General is the first of its kind in Maryland history. It was established after the Maryland General Assembly enacted legislation in April 2023 empowering the Attorney General, for the first time ever, to enforce federal and state civil rights laws, including laws outlawing discrimination in housing, lending, employment, commercial transactions, and public accommodation. The Civil Rights Division will be dedicated to investigating, filing, and litigating claims under this new authority.

Smith received a B.A. in Philosophy from the University of Maine at Orono. He graduated from Antioch School of Law. He will assume his duties as Chief of the Civil Rights Division in January 2024.

<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2023/091323.pdf>