

## LOCAL NEWS

# Federal judge rules racial discrimination lawsuit against Maryland State Police can continue



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A federal judge has ruled the [racial discrimination lawsuit against Maryland State Police](#) can move forward.

The state police had sought to have the complaint dismissed in federal court, but U.S. District Judge Brendan A. Hurson wrote in a ruling dated Friday that some of the claims against the statewide police agency could move to the discovery stage.

Specifically, the judge said previous EEOC filings gave the agency sufficient notice that the claims made were broader than the individual level — that there were other troopers allegedly affected — and that a transfer could be considered an adverse employment action, as the U.S. Supreme Court found earlier this year.

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The judge dismissed, without prejudice, the claims made against individual defendants. A dismissal without prejudice means the claims could be reintroduced at a later stage, should additional evidence be found in discovery. Plaintiffs' amended complaint, filed last year, named current and former police leaders, including the superintendent, Col. Roland L. Butler Jr., the former superintendent, Col. Woodrow W. Jones III, and others.



Michal Shinnar, one of the attorneys for the plaintiffs in the lawsuit, applauded the ruling on Monday.

“We think that this is a great ruling for plaintiffs, in terms of allowing this important case to move forward, and rejecting the arguments that MSP had made about why it should be dismissed,” Shinnar said.

The state police did not respond to a request Monday afternoon for comment.

The lawsuit, which asked a judge to certify class action status on behalf of employees of color, dates back to 2022, when three named plaintiffs alleged the state police force has a longstanding pattern of discrimination through discipline, retaliation against officers who make complaints and denied promotions. The complaint said the agency has imposed “unfounded, unwarranted and overly severe and disparate penalties,” that it had an unfair promotional system and maintained a hostile work environment.

The plaintiffs, Bryon Tribue, Matin Dunlap and Anaisse Diaz, are current or former troopers of color. Both Tribue and Dunlap are Black men. Diaz is a Black Puerto Rican woman.

Tribue said in a statement provided by his attorney that he was “very excited by this decision and the chance to move forward and get justice.”

Separately, [the U.S. Department of Justice is investigating alleged racial discrimination](#) in the Maryland State Police’s hiring and promotion practices. The U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland, Erek L. Barron, said when he announced the “pattern or practice” investigation that it would examine how the agency hires, promotes, trains, disciplines and makes special opportunities available to employees.

In federal court, the agency had argued plaintiffs’ claim should be dismissed because the allegations were insufficient, because one of the named plaintiffs had not exhausted his administrative remedies, and because the plaintiffs didn’t provide enough evidence of racial discrimination or retaliation.

The judge agreed there wasn’t enough specific evidence regarding actions or inactions by the individuals named in the lawsuit. But he disagreed that Dunlap couldn’t sue, because the judge said he could piggyback onto the EEOC claim made by Tribue. That doctrine, known as single-filing or “piggybacking,” allows intervenors in discrimination suits to rely on an original EEOC charge rather than each file individually.

Next, the parties are expected to discuss scheduling for the discovery stage. After discovery, the judge could make a ruling on whether the suit can proceed as a class action lawsuit or not.

*This article may be updated.*

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