



***Governor's Commission on Hispanic and Latin American Community Affairs
Strategic Planning Session (SPS-I) Meeting***

Thursday, February 4, 2025

6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Commission Attendance: **Yes**

Diana Acosta, Member
Alicia Altamirano, Member
Gabriela Argoti-Fernandez, Member
Ernesto Chanona, Chair
Lorena De Pombo, Member
Veronica Estrada, Member
Lena Hernandez, Member
Stephanie Landaverde, Member
Victoria Gomez Lorenzo, Member

Yuliana Macey, Member
Gabriel Moreno, Esq., Member
Dr. Maria Ramos Olazagasti, Member
Dinorah Olmos
Jennifer Rios
Nitzalis Rivera, Member
Ana Salmeron, Member
Katie Simbala, Member
Javier Toro

GOCI Staff:

Gregory Yancey, Chief of Staff for the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives (GOCI)
Cheryl Madigan, Executive Assistant for the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives (GOCI)

I. Call to Order:

Ernesto Chanona, Chair – Meeting called to order at 6:02 p.m.

II. Opening Remarks:

- ❖ Ernesto Chanona gave welcoming remarks.
- ❖ Gregory Yancey, Chief of Staff, Governor's Office of Community Initiatives
COS Yancey welcomed everyone and introduced Kamal Essaheb, Senior Advisor for the Governor and Director of Immigrant Affairs.
- ❖ Kamal Essaheb (kamal.essaheb@maryland.gov), Director of Immigrant Affairs of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives provided his background and said he is here to provide information on immigrant issues. His special assistant at GOCI is Abigail (Abbie) Barnum (abigail.barnum@maryland.gov).

III. Presenters:

- ❖ Secretary of Paul Monteiro and Patrick Sawyer from the Department of Service and Civic Innovation and Lysbeth Vasquez (member of the program) talked about Maryland Corps Service Year Option program maryland.serve.

100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032



- ❖ Gerardo Martinez, CEO with Global Alliance of Latinos in Agriculture provided his background with the Maryland Tourism Development Board, Food Center Authority Board, and Wild Kid Acres <https://wildkidacres.org>. He helps advocate for other Latino farmers around the State of Maryland. He invited the Commission to hold their next meeting on March 4, 2025 in person at Wild Acres Farm, 731 Central Avenue, East, Edgewater, MD 21037. Commissioner Gabriel Moreno will help with the setting up of the hybrid meeting.

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
To hold March 4, 2025 commission meeting hybrid/in-person at Wild Acres Farm.	Ernest Chanona	Jennifer Rios	11Y-0N-0A

IV. Sub-Committees: (The chair of each subcommittee to provide a written report of updates and discussions concerning their committee's progress since the last public commission meeting.)

- ❖ **Business/Economic Development:**
Commissioner Lorena De Pombo met with Alexandra Boycheck from the Latino Economic Development Center – Program Development. They talked about closing the gap in construction business. To help people with obtaining main contracts and government contracts. This will go with “Connecting Marylanders to Jobs”. [Governor's Office of Small, Minortiv & Women Business Affairs](#), contact [Lisa Mitchell Sennaar](#) at 410.508.8089. Commission Jennifer Rio's provided details on an example of a proposal with the Department of Correctional Services.
- ❖ **Community (Arts/Culture/Faith):**
Commissioner Lena Hernandez spoke about a shared calendar. The committee will be discussing something to do with the Faith community. Commissioner Jennifer Rios will be holding a Zoom Eventbrite for Know Your Rights.
- ❖ **Education (Workforce Development):**
Commissioner Dinorah Olmos stated there is a lack of communication concerning their roles as commissioners. They are requesting a letter of support to provide to the communities. COS Greg Yancey spoke about the budget deficit, and the new executive orders. The commission submitted a letter to the Department of Education. GOCI has reached out to the Department of Education to set up a meeting between them and the commission. The superintendent is prepared to release updates to the concerns of the new executive orders. Mr. Yancey will be the primary contact for the commission at this time until another Administrative Director is obtained. Vice Chair Gaby Argoti-Fernandez would like to know what steps to get the GD Testing to be in Spanish. She and the rest of the commissioners would like written procedures on how to write letters. COS Yancey stated that the commission is designed to provide the Governor with their opinions, not providing it to the communities. Commissioner Katie Simbala would like to find out on “Misunderstandings” with what is happening with ICE. COS Mr. Yancey asked the commissioners to bring to him or the Attorney General's Office the actual firsthand inquiries. The commission would like talking points.

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
Governor's Office of Hispanic and Latino American Community Affairs commissioners will communicate first-hand information on issues pertaining to immigrants in Maryland.	Ernest Chanona	Gaby Argoti-Fernandez	12Y-0N-0A



COS Yancey to provide procedures within a week on how the commission can communicate with the communities. Commissioner Rio's wants transparency. Mr. Yancey suggested having a workshop.

❖ **Health:**

Maria Ramos reported that they are doing a series of listening sessions with community organizations and service providers to understand the experiences of the Latino community in accessing health services. They have spoken with Dr. Tavarez at Kennedy Krieger Institute and discovered lack of education in the community about mental health, integrated services, language barriers, since they only have information in English, and lack of health insurance. They also spoke with Erika Paredes from SAMU First Response, which is a non-profit that provides services to immigrants, especially newcomers. They interface with clients for about 3 to 4 weeks to provide recommendations to service providers.

❖ **Housing:**

No updates provided.

V. Executive Orders Discussion:

Chair Ernesto Chanona and COS Greg Yancey went over the changes of the Executive Orders.

VI. Bylaw Discussion:

COS Yancey informed the commission that they can draft a set of bylaws that is consistent with the new executive orders. He will provide a template for the bylaws.

VII. Maryland 250 Commission:

COS Yancey said there will be a letter/templet to go out to the commissions that will state the asks within the next two months. This celebration event is yearlong in 2026 and it's to celebrate Maryland's 250th birthday.

VIII. Open Meetings Act Discussion

COS Yancey provided a brief description of what it consists of.

<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/OpenGov/OpenMeetings/default.aspx>

IX. Governor's Commission on Hispanic and Latin American Community Affairs 2025 Strategic Planning Discussion:

Chair Ernesto Chanona tabled this until the next commission meeting.

X. Adjournment:

Motion	1 st	2 nd	Vote
Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.	Ernesto Chanona	Gabriel Moreno	12Y-0N-0A