

Governor's Commission on Hispanic Affairs Meeting

Wednesday, March 30, 2022

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

Via Zoom Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Commission Attendance: Yes

Walkiria Pool, Chair

Francisco Ayala

Lilian Castillo-Harris

Veronica Estrada

Erick a. Oribio

Liliana E. Rojas

Carlos Juan Santos

Gabriela Argoti-Fernandez

Juan Caicedo

Maria D'Arcy

Alexander G. Núñez

Miguel Romao Palmeiro

David A. Rosario

GOCI Staff:

Lorena Rivera – Admin. Director of Hispanic Affairs and Director of Immigrant Affairs, GOCI

Soo Koo – Deputy Director of Immigrant Affairs, GOCI

Christina Poy – Administrative Director of APAA & SAAA Commission, GOCI

Cheryl Madigan – Project Coordinator for the Ethnic Commissions, GOCI

Guests: N/A

I. Call to Order:

Walkiria Pool, Chair – 6:09 p.m.

II. Welcome Remarks & Announcements: Lorena Rivera – Dir. Immigrant Affairs, GOCI

Lorena thanked the commission for their continuous support in pushing information on COVID 19, vaccines, boosters, food drives with their local churches and promoting their businesses.

III. Office of Immigrant Affairs Update:

Lorena Rivera – Dir. of Immigrant Affairs, GOCI was recently appointed as a Director of the Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs back in October 2021.

One of the main goals is that they are establishing a Toll Free-Multilingual hotline and website. The website has already been created,

<https://goci.maryland.gov/immigrant/>. The main goal of this toll-free, multilingual hotline is basically to connect new Americans and Immigrant communities to resources that not only that the State provides, but also that local knowledge nonprofit organizations can provide. It can range from medical services, health services and English classes. It can also entail if they need information about workforce. if they need to enroll their child into school. By dialing MD211, it can connect you to those resources, but we are creating a brand-new number for this purpose. We found out that when people call MD211, they need to go through

these confusing steps, and we figured that if that person does not speak English, they're know what language they are speaking, so that way they can connect to those immediately. I know that there are sometimes issues due to language barriers, therefore, we want to get rid of the confusion and those steps. Here is MD211 website, <https://211md.org/>. You will see the multitude of resources that it provides. The hotline should be ready by next month or so and it will also include hate crime.

Soo Koo - Deputy Dir. of Immigrant Affairs, GOCI, informed us on the American Hate Crime Workgroup. This was originated from the Governor. Here is the website link: <https://governor.maryland.gov/resourcecenter/>. This new immigration hotline can also serve as a new improved channel to receive hate crimes, reports, and incidents. 211MD is going to be a really great tool to get to know what's going on in our community. So, once it is set up, a new 10-digit number will be created for the hotline. Anyone who doesn't speak English or who has limited English proficiency, they will just call in and then speak to a call specialists and work with a translator interpreter for their language line. The new hotline number will be the same infrastructure, but it will be a new multilingual version.

Lorena Rivera – Dir. of Immigrant Affairs, GOCI presented the next initiative, which is to coordinate with State agencies that provide services to immigrants. To see what programs that have to offer. Immigrant Affairs will be having a partnership with the Maryland Department of Labor. They have a skilled immigrant task force which provides a multitude of resources, and they also have the Maryland Job Exchange around the entire State. Here are some other agencies that they are looking to partner with. The Department of Education, which has scholarship programs. Also, there is the Department of Human Resources, and they provide the SNAP program. Then there is the Department of Commerce, which they have initiatives, programs and small businesses programs. There're other agencies, that provide a multitude of services that they would like to promote in various languages, not only in Spanish, but in various languages, so they're looking to partner with GOCI's other commissions to see if they could get help with translation.

Soo Koo - Deputy Dir. of Immigrant Affairs, GOCI, discussed the access to programs that teach the English language, including engaging non-profit organizations, other qualified providers of ESOL programs. On the Immigrant Affairs website there is a list of a class providers. They will be coordinating with the Department of Labor. If anyone knows of any innovative English classes that you know about it in your community, please let us know. This is needed for our immigrants/refugees for such things like job searching and job interviews. The last topic was exploitation of the immigrant communities. This falls under the Anti Hate Crime. Please visit the resources on our website.

Lorena Rivera – Dir. of Immigrant Affairs, GOCI mentioned that Walkiria Pool says that we are applying for grants to support ESOL and basic digital literacy combined course. Miguel says we can provide information on how to receive a UV

to victims of crimes. The last incentive is establishing a network of neighborhood-based opportunity centers. Immigrant Affairs has been meeting with local nonprofit organizations recently, and their goal is to partner with them and create neighborhood opportunity centers where we can take the information from our State agencies, these resources and these services that State agencies have and provide them to these opportunity centers. So, when people go to these opportunities' centers, they can encounter these services in multi languages and several languages, so it would be a hub for them to collect information and any information that other nonprofits have. It would be more of like a centralized hub. They would like to have these opportunities centers in areas like Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Baltimore City and Frederick County. These are areas where we know that there's a high population of new Americans. They're in the beginning stages of this and they are asking GOCI's commissioners to provide us with a list of nonprofit organizations that you think that we could partner with. Also, if you have any ideas on any other services that you know that are out there, that are not State agencies.

Question: Madam Chair Wakiria Pool – She is currently working on a project with the Purple Line and they have developed a resource page for programs and organizations that are providing program for the immigrant community. But she wanted to make sure that it was really geared to our community meeting those who don't have a working permit and that they are undocumented. These individuals / families go to apply for some programs, but then they say you need to have some type of documentation. So, they developed a list of all organizations that are serving the undocumented immigrants and what services they provide, specifically for Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

Suggestion: Commissioner Veronica Estrada – She has contacts and has participated as a sponsor for the Ethiopian community. They have a local, independent and immigrant welcoming association. They host open houses or block parties to be able to render services and orientation on how to become an US citizen, for the Ethiopian community. She will provide Lorena and Sue the point of contact for that director that's in charge of them. Secondly, on this Immigrant Affairs website, she noticed the references to Power of Attorney, dual Power of Attorney and Wills. During the Covid crisis, there were a lot of situations when people passed away; family didn't know they needed these documents. She recommends hosting events to get education or what they need to have to the U.S. Citizens or new immigrants to this country.

Question: Commission Alexander Nunez wanted to clarify which type of non-profits organizations and Lorena confirmed only ones that work with the Immigrant communities.

Commissioner Miguel Palmeiro offered the following help for Immigrant Affairs. Education, translation, or legal paperwork. He has interns and staff to provide support that is needed.

III. Commissioner Events Check-In/Updates & Q&A

Please provide Director Lorena Rivera two to three weeks in advance notice for Citation requests.

Madam Chair Wakiria Pool – Need volunteers for the food distributions, especially in Baltimore City at the Brooklyn area. This is done the third weekend of every month. There are also three other food distribution in the Prince George’s area. If you know of anyone who needs assistance in paying their mortgage, the Department of Housing and Community Development has Grants to help with these difficulties. Also, for the rental assistance program, there is still funding available for those who are who have a letter of eviction. The State can support up to 15 late payments and up to 3 additional payments.

Madam Chair Wakiria Pool and Director Lorena Rivera - Hispanic Heritage Month was mentioned. Their thoughts were to have something that can be memorable with this commission and Governor Hogan. Lorena wants the commission to come up with ideas and provide at our next meeting on, June 8th. Commissioner Alexander Nunez suggested to work with another State agency or non-profit organization for this event. Please provide contact information to Lorena.

Commissioner Veronica Estrada suggested that we make a video of the accomplishments that the Commission and Administration has achieved.

Director Lorena Rivera brought up the First Lady’s May 7th Annual event. The First Lady would like to know if we have any connections with any performers, any cultural performers, also any food vendors that would like to try to give away some free food to the public. Gabby has so graciously decided to participate and plan to donate some flan cakes. The event is from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Gabby will provide Lorena with some performers information.

V. Public Announcements – N/A

VI. Closing

Madam Chair Walkiria Pool thank everyone.

VII. Meeting Adjourned

Madam Chair Walkiria Pool adjourned the meeting at 6:53 p.m.