



## **Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**



*Photo courtesy of the Executive Office of the Governor:  
Proclamation Ceremony for International Transgender Day of Visibility, March 31, 2023*

# **2023 Annual Report**

## Executive Summary

The 2023 Annual Report of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs reflects a year of dedicated effort towards advancing equality, inclusion, and advocacy for LGBTQIA+ communities across the State. Throughout the year, the Commission has focused on several key areas, demonstrating significant progress and establishing recommendations and best practices for LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the years ahead. In its second year of operation, the Commission continued to lay the groundwork and build a strong foundation to support LGBTQIA+ communities in Maryland.

**Commission Development and Growth:** Holding its first meeting in 2022, the Commission has rapidly evolved, marking significant milestones in its journey towards overcoming challenges facing LGBTQIA+ individuals and establishing recommendations for inclusion. In 2023, the Commission underwent notable structural changes, indicative of its nascent stage, adaptability, and commitment to leaving no one behind. Through legislation, the Commission changed its name from “LGBTQ” to “LGBTQIA+” to better reflect the diverse identities within the community. Additionally, the Commission expanded from 15 to 21 members, broadening its representation and expertise to better serve the needs of Maryland’s LGBTQIA+ population. In November of 2023, Governor Wes Moore appointed 10 new commissioners, filling the expanded seats and four vacancies.

**State of the LGBTQIA+ Community:** While significant progress has been made in Maryland and across the country, formidable challenges remain. As reflected in national news and local data, a new wave of anti-trans bills, policies, and rhetoric threatens the rights and wellbeing of LGBTQIA+ individuals. Findings clearly show that LGBTQIA+ individuals continue to face challenges related to access to affirming housing, healthcare, education and employment, along with increased risks of discrimination, harassment, and violence.

**Policy Advocacy:** The Commission actively engaged with State legislators and policymakers to advocate for policies that promote equality and protect the rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals:

- Successfully advocated with several trans-led community groups to pass the **Trans Health Equity Act** which ensures those enrolled in the Maryland Medical Assistance Program have access to life-saving and medically necessary gender-affirming care. On May 3, 2023, Governor Moore signed Senate Bill 460 and House Bill 283 into law expanding access to gender-affirming healthcare in Maryland.
- Guided and supported the first-ever Pride Reception at Government House on June 5, 2023, during which Governor Moore signed an **executive order to protect gender-affirming healthcare** in Maryland.
- Unanimously adopted and published their **Recommendations for Supporting LGBTQIA+ Students** at their September 11, 2023 meeting after a thorough study of the experiences of LGBTQIA+ students in Maryland’s schools
- Unanimously approved their **2024 Policy Priorities, Recommendations and Best Practices** for LGBTQIA+ inclusion at the November 13, 2023 meeting.

**Community Engagement:** The Commission participated in over 37 community events, and Pride celebrations to enhance visibility and awareness of the Commission and represent the Governor's Office across the State. Additionally, commissioners and staff attended dozens of conferences, forums, and community meetings to assess the challenges and address the diverse needs of LGBTQIA+ communities in Maryland. The final section of this report highlights the events and outreach activities in which commissioners and staff participated.

**Building Visibility and Awareness:** Recognizing the intersecting identities and unique challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals, the Commission prioritized initiatives aimed at promoting equity and inclusion, achieving the following proclamations by Maryland Governor Wes Moore:

- In a historic event, **International Transgender Day of Visibility** was proclaimed on March 31, 2023 in a ceremony attended by over 100 community members.
- After a 10 year hiatus, June was proclaimed to be **LGBTQIA+ Pride Month** in the State of Maryland to celebrate the contributions, resilience, courage, and joy of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders.
- The first-ever proclamation recognizing **National Coming Out Day** was signed on October 11, 2023 to offer support and acceptance to LGBTQIA+ individuals.
- In another first for Maryland, November 20, 2023 was proclaimed **Transgender Day of Remembrance** in Maryland to honor the memory of the transgender people whose lives were lost due to anti-transgender violence and rhetoric.

**Looking ahead**, the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs remains committed to advancing its legislative mandates and serving as a leading advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights and equity in the State. The Commission intends to:

1. **Expand funding and resource allocation** from the State to address challenges and disparities faced by LGBTQIA+ communities.
2. **Strengthen partnerships** with community organizations, government agencies, and stakeholders to enhance collective impact and drive systemic change.
3. **Expand access to culturally competent services and resources** for LGBTQIA+ youth, elders, people of color, people with disabilities, and other underserved populations.
4. **Continue Advocating** for inclusive healthcare policies, comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, and measures to address access to affirming healthcare, housing, education, and employment.
5. **Amplify LGBTQIA+ voices** in decision making processes and promote representation across all levels of government.



STATE OF MARYLAND

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
**Wes Moore**

Dear Friends and Advocates,

I am honored to share with you the 2023 Annual Report of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs.

The creation of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs was a pivotal step forward toward assessing the challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals and building out best practices for their inclusion. Over the past year, the Commission has been instrumental in guiding our Administration's work, fostering collaboration with stakeholders statewide, and formulating policy priorities and recommendations for LGBTQIA+ inclusion within our State agencies.

Following recommendations from the Commission, our team has made a number of important strides in our work to build a more inclusive Maryland. We proudly signed the Trans Health Equity Act into law, expanding coverage for gender-affirming care. We crafted and enacted an executive order protecting individuals receiving or providing gender affirming care in Maryland from legal repercussions in other states. Additionally, we issued many first-ever proclamations and citations, elevating the visibility of LGBTQIA+ communities, events, and leaders. And every step of the way, we've moved in close partnership with the newly-created Maryland Legislative LGBTQ+ Caucus.

But our work is far from over. Challenges persist in ensuring affirming access to housing, health care, education, and employment. Many LGBTQIA+ community members face increased risks of discrimination and violence. The Moore-Miller Administration remains steadfast in our commitment to working alongside the Commission to address these obstacles and ensure no one is left behind. In our Maryland, no one should have to justify their own humanity. Every Marylander deserves to live authentically without fear – and our dedication to this principle is unwavering.

A special thank-you goes to Joseph Toolan, Deborah Dunn, Jeremy Browning, and all of our commissioners for their steady leadership, dedication, and commitment to advancing LGBTQIA+ equality in 2023. Congratulations to the newly-elected 2024 Commission leadership, Chair Lee Blinder, and Vice Chair, Kijana West. I eagerly anticipate our continued collaboration to make Maryland a leader in LGBTQIA+ inclusion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Wes Moore'.

Wes Moore (he/him)

Governor

State of Maryland

**100 State Circle, Annapolis, Maryland 21404**

**(410) 974-3400**

**TTY Users Call via MD Relay**

**[governor.maryland.gov](http://governor.maryland.gov)**

## Message from the Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives (GOCI)

Dear Marylanders:

I am pleased to share the significant progress the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs has made, presented here in their 2023 Annual Report.

GOCI, as the primary community outreach department of the Governor's Office, has a mission to empower and connect Maryland's diverse communities through active engagement, dialogue, and collaboration, ensuring representation, understanding and mutual growth for all. Our vision is clear – we aim for a unified Maryland where every community is heard, valued, and actively involved in building a brighter, more inclusive future.

Our journey is anchored in these core values: celebrating diversity and inclusion, fostering engagement through open dialogue and community participation, collaboration and partnerships; empowering communities to thrive; and upholding the highest standards of integrity in all interactions.

One of the key pillars of GOCI is the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs. I am committed to supporting and advocating for LGBTQIA+ individuals to ensure everyone can live authentically with dignity and respect. The Moore-Miller Administration's promise to leave no one behind resonates deeply with this commitment, and our office is dedicated to advancing the rights and well-being of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders.

As we reflect on the many achievements of the past year, I extend my gratitude to the 2023 Commission leadership, Chair Joe Toolan, Vice Chair Deborah Dunn, Director Jeremy Browning, and the entire Commission for their hard work to provide policy and best practice recommendations for LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Building on this progress, I look forward to collaborating with the 2024 Chair and Vice Chair, Lee Blinder and Kijana West, respectively, and our dedicated new and reappointed members of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and I look forward to a year of continued growth, collaboration, and positive impact.

Best regards,



Lawrence Walker (he/him)  
Executive Director  
Governor's Office of Community Initiatives  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, MD 21032



## Message from the 2023 Chair of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

Dear Marylanders:

I am honored to present the 2023 Annual Report on behalf of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs. In this, our second full year, the Commission reached new communities and individuals across the State, from the mountains, to the Chesapeake Bay, to the Atlantic shores. As in years past, we have seen attacks on LGBTQIA+ communities across the United States and here in Maryland. However here in Maryland, we have also seen tremendous progress for our communities. While threats still exist, I am confident that Maryland will continue to lead the nation in LGBTQIA+ inclusive policies and protections.

I commend and thank Governor Wes Moore, Lt. Governor Aruna Miller, and the entire Moore-Miller Administration for their leadership. Beginning with the transition of administrations in early 2023, we saw support solidified by the signing of the Trans Health Equity Act and an executive order signed by Governor Moore to increase access to gender-affirming care and protect the rights of individuals and providers.

The Commission made many notable achievements in 2023, including successfully advocating for the passage of the Trans Health Equity Act, publishing the first set of Recommendations for Supporting LGBTQIA+ Students and 2024 Policy Priorities with even more progress occurring behind the scenes on Commission structure and relationship building. I extend gratitude to 2023 Vice Chair, Debb Dunn, my successor, Chair Lee Blinder, and Director Jeremy Browning.

Finally, I would like to recognize Delegate Lily Qi, who worked to establish the Commission in 2021, and worked with us again in 2023 on alterations which expanded the Commission from 15 to 21 members, ensuring more inclusive representation across the State.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as Chair the last two years and I am looking forward to leading the Strategic Planning Committee in 2024. On Behalf of the entire Commission, We look forward to continuing to serve Maryland's LGBTQIA+ communities for many years to come.

Sincerely,



Joseph Toolan (he/him)  
Inaugural Chair 2022-2023  
Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

## Message from the Director of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

Dear Community Members and Allies:

I am proud to present the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs' second annual report showcasing our collective efforts and accomplishments in advancing equality, inclusion and advocacy for LGBTQIA+ communities across the State of Maryland.

Throughout the past year, our Commission has demonstrated unwavering dedication to supporting queer and trans Marylanders. We have worked tirelessly to assess challenges, establish best practices, and advocate for policies that promote equality and protect the rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals. From legislative and administrative advocacy to community engagement initiatives, our commitment to leaving no one behind has been resolute.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Governor Wes Moore, Lt. Governor Aruna Miller, and the entire Moore-Miller Administration for their steadfast support and leadership. Together we achieved significant milestones, including expanding access and protecting gender-affirming healthcare in Maryland, increasing visibility through events and outreach, and uplifting historically excluded voices.

I commend the steady leadership of our past Chair, Joseph Toolan, and Vice Chair Debb Dunn, whose enthusiasm and passion have propelled the Commission forward. As we welcome Chair Blinder, Vice Chair Kijana West, and our newly appointed commissioners, I am confident that our collaboration will continue to make Maryland a leader in LGBTQIA+ inclusion.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to advancing our legislative mandates, strengthening partnerships, expanding access to resources, and amplifying LGBTQIA+ voices in State decision-making processes. Together, we will continue to advocate for a more inclusive and equitable Maryland where every individual is valued, respected, and empowered to live authentically.

Thank you to our commissioners, community members, advocates, and allies for your continued support and service. Our work is far from over, but with your ongoing commitment, I am confident that we will create a safer and more affirming Maryland for all.

With gratitude,



Jeremy Browning (he/him)  
Director  
Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

# **Section 1**

## **About the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**



## About the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

**Brief History:** The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs was originally created by the 2021 General Assembly by [House Bill 130](#), sponsored by Delegate Lily Qi. Following the passage of House Bill 130, the 15 member commission was appointed by the Governor and held their first public meeting in January 2022. Once the commissioners were seated, they appointed Director Jeremy Browning (he/him) with approval of the Governor in July 2022. In 2023, the General Assembly altered House Bill 130 with [House Bill 141](#) to expand the Commission from 15-21 members and added “IA+” to the name.

### Legislative Mandates:

- Assess the challenges facing LGBTQIA+ communities
- Collect data across State agencies on:
  - Implementation of LGBTQIA+-inclusive policies
  - Complaints alleging discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity
- Study and establish best practices for inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals and communities
- Inform the Executive and Legislative branches of State government of issues concerning LGBTQIA+ persons
- Offer testimony on issues concerning LGBTQIA+ persons before legislative and administrative bodies
- Act as a clearinghouse for activities to avoid duplication of efforts
- Create surveys and appoint advisory committees
- Publish annual report and any other material the Commission considers necessary, that includes recommendations on policies for LGBTQIA+ adults and youth that work to end discriminatory practices in the State
- Seek money from the Federal Government, foundations, and private sources for any of its purposes

Find more information about the Commission at <https://goci.maryland.gov/lgbtq/>.

## Commission Meetings

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs meets bi-monthly and is subject to the Maryland Open Meetings Act. View upcoming meetings, agendas and meeting minutes by visiting:

<https://goci.maryland.gov/lgbtq/meetings/>

### 2023 Commission Meetings

- January 9, 2023
- March 13, 2023
- May 8, 2023
- July 29, 2023
- September 11, 2023
- November 14, 2023

### 2024 Commission Meetings

- January 8, 2024
- March 11, 2024
- May 13, 2024
- July 8, 2024
- September 9, 2024
- November 4, 2024

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs strives to make its meetings as accessible as possible. If you need accommodations or assistance, please contact the Director at [jeremy.browning@maryland.gov](mailto:jeremy.browning@maryland.gov) at least one week prior to the meeting.

## Commission Committees

Committees meet irregularly at the discretion of the committee chairs. Standing committees and advisory committees are subject to the Maryland Open Meetings Act. View upcoming meetings, agendas and meeting minutes by visiting: <https://goci.maryland.gov/lgbtq/meetings/>

### Standing Committees

- Policy
- Budget & Finance

### Advisory Committees

- Youth & Education
- Health & Wellness

### Special Committees\*

- Ad-hoc Strategic Planning

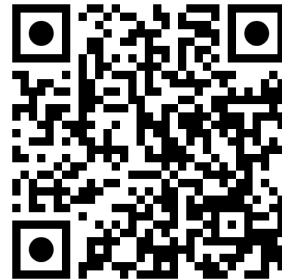
*\*Special committees include ad-hoc committees and workgroups which are not subject to the Maryland Open Meetings Act.*

## Maryland LGBTQIA+ Resource Directory

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs is working to create a public resource directory of LGBTQIA+ affirming resources across the State. All resources provided by nonprofits, community groups, and government agencies will be reviewed and considered. The public resource directory will be published on the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs website.

### Resource Submission Form:

Visit: <https://forms.gle/mPAeJcxzv8XPXG3B6> or scan QR code:



### Join the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs Email List:

Stay up to date with Commission meetings, activities, community events, and more!

Visit: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/2HquHmX/LGBTQIA> or scan QR code:



### Support the Commission's Work

The legislation encourages the Commission to seek money from the Federal Government, foundations, and private sources for any of its purposes.

Interested in supporting the Commission's work or know of potential funding opportunities? Contact Director Jeremy Browning at [jeremy.browning@maryland.gov](mailto:jeremy.browning@maryland.gov).

## Members of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

The 21-member Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs reflects the age, gender, gender identity or expression, ancestral, national origin, color, disability, religious, sex, sexual orientation, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic diversity of the State of Maryland. Members are required to know the issues facing the LGBTQIA+ communities and advocate for solutions to the problems facing LGBTQIA+ communities.

### Commissioners and Officers as of January 2024

#### **Chair: Lee Blinder (they/them)**

*Baltimore City*



Mx. Lee Blinder (they/them) is a proud, openly nonbinary, transgender, and queer Marylander, and the founding Executive Director of Trans Maryland. They are the first openly transgender chair of a Maryland Commission. They recently served on Governor Wes Moore's transition team and they sit on LGBTQIA+ advisory boards around the State. Mx. Blinder facilitates transgender 101 and gender-affirming workplace training for government, medical organizations, and private companies. Additionally, they lead Trans Maryland's peer-to-peer name and gender marker change program. They have worked in service to their community for over 27 years, helping launch the Gender Sexuality

Alliance (GSA) at Montgomery Blair High School in 1996. They enjoy spending time with their adopted animal companions, their cat Basil Pasta Marinara, and their dogs Cupcake and Chickpea.

#### **Vice Chair: Kijana West (she/her)**

*Allegany County*



Kijana, a dedicated LGBTQIA+ advocate for over 30 years, has made lasting contributions to the community. Beginning as a Peer Educator in New York City in the early '90s, she championed early trans rights, organized the first Bronx Pride, and co-founded the Ali Forney Center for LGBTQIA+ youth. Kijana has deep roots in Allegany County and grew up spending summers in the mountains of Maryland with her great-grandmother. Upon moving to Western Maryland, Kijana identified a crucial need for LGBTQIA+ services, leading to her involvement in the Cumberland Pride Festival and chairing the Allegany County NAACP's LGBTQIA+ committee. Recognizing a

significant service gap, she founded Safe Space Cumberland in June 2022—the region's first LGBTQIA+ Youth drop-in center and social work agency.

**Nicholas Augustine (he/him)**

*Frederick County*



Nicholas Augustine has served on the Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs since October 2021. His over 25 years of public service have involved volunteering in the fire/rescue service and his current position as an Assistant Chief of Police for Montgomery County Police. Throughout his public service career, he has advocated to build trust between the LGBTQIA+ community and public service agencies. Nicholas has a graduate degree in criminal justice from Arizona State University and is completing his second graduate degree in public safety from the University of Virginia. He resides with his husband and daughter in Frederick County.

**Joan Bryan (she/her)**

*Baltimore County*



Joan is a devoted LGBTQIA+ advocate and ally with a profound passion for supporting queer and trans youth. She is actively engaged in various community roles, including with the Baltimore County Human Relations Commission, the Baltimore County Lynching Memorial Project, and previously with the Liberty Road Community Council from 2007 to 2023. Joan co-founded an Anti-Racist Discussion group with the Baltimore County Public Library in 2020 and is a member of PFLAG in Howard and Baltimore Counties. Bringing her 44 years of federal government service, coupled with her BA and MS in Human Services Administration from Notre Dame of Maryland University, Joan is uniquely qualified to contribute meaningfully to the Commission's mission. As a widow, mother, and proud grandmother of a trans grandson, Joan brings both professional expertise and personal empathy to her advocacy work, ensuring a compassionate and informed approach. She lives with feline companions Thelma and Louise.

**Josie Caballero (she/her)**

*Montgomery County*



Josie Caballero is an influential Latina transgender leader and the Director of the 2022 US Transgender Survey and Special Projects at the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE). She is instrumental in the success and reach of the 2022 US Trans Survey, collaborating with researchers, academics, and activists to foster a more inclusive and respectful society for the trans community. Josie leverages her exceptional skills in coalition building, policy development, and community advocacy to enhance the visibility and understanding of transgender issues. Additionally, Josie serves as Vice President of the Transgender American Veterans Association (TAVA). She combines a six-year tenure in the Navy as a nuclear reactor operator with a decade-long expertise in political management and consulting, where she championed vital causes across the United States.

## **August Clayton (any pronouns)**

*Charles County*



Rooted in Southern Maryland, August is a resource organizer and founder of Mosaic. He began organizing in 2016 around trans student belonging and access, HIV decriminalization, and resourcing trans-led organizations. He has been deeply politicized by non-carceral alternatives, democratizing public funds, and building relationships toward local power. In his free time, August enjoys watching baseball, eating crabs at Captain Leonard's, and spending afternoons in Piney Point with his partner and family.

## **Amit "Mickey" Dhir (he/him), MBA, MSN, AGNP-C, AAHIVS**

*Baltimore City*



Mickey is an infectious disease Nurse Practitioner at Chase Brexton Health Care, specializing in HIV/STI management and prevention, and primary care for LGBTQIA+ populations. In his Ph.D. studies at Johns Hopkins University, Mickey is exploring the Acceptability and Impact of Long-acting (LA) Injectable Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) among same-gender loving men and transgender women in Baltimore. As a community leader and advocate, he has partnered with local organizations like the Baltimore City Health Department and U equals U (Undetectable equals Untransmissible) campaign to educate communities about HIV management and prevention. Additionally, Mickey leads efforts to address health disparities and actively involves clinicians in implementing evidence-based HIV prevention care models in the U.S. and internationally. On the Commission, Mickey works to address HIV treatment and prevention access issues, such as medication access, medical coverage, etc., and increased funding for HIV treatment and prevention services. He is dedicated to fostering positive change and ensuring equitable access to quality medical care for all.

## **Kurt Doan (he/him)**

*Harford County*



Dr. Kurt Doan is a higher education professional with 28 years of experience working for colleges and universities nationwide. Born and raised in rural Lancaster, Pennsylvania, he became involved in LGBTQIA+ advocacy while attending Penn State University. As a graduate student at the University of Arizona, he served as President of the LGB Graduate Student Alliance and became involved with Safe Zone—a program aimed at improving the campus climate for LGBTQIA+ students. In Arizona, he served as a trained crisis intervention specialist for the Wingspan Domestic Violence Project—a program that works to address and end violence in the lives of LGBTQIA+ people. Kurt completed a doctorate in higher education leadership at Wilmington University in May 2021; his thesis focused on the data invisibility of LGBTQIA+ community college students. He currently serves as the President of Upper Chesapeake Bay Pride.

**Deborah Dunn (she/her), PAC, MBA**

*Prince George's County*



Deborah Dunn, PAC, MBA, is a distinguished family practice Physician Assistant and Trans Health Coordinator at Chase Brexton Health Care's LGBTQ+ Resource Center. Graduating from Howard University in 1983 and holding an MBA from Johns Hopkins University, Dunn provides leadership in transgender care, establishing best practices, training medical providers, and advocating at the State level. She played a pivotal role in creating Gender: Joy (Journey of Youth), a program for trans/gender-diverse youth. Recognized as Physician Assistant of the Year in 2018 and 2021, and a Health Care Hero in 2018, she serves on various boards, including the Maryland Board of Physicians, Physician

Assistant Advisory, and the American Academy of Physician Assistants DEI commission, as well as Chair of the Budget & Finance Committee of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs.

**Anthony E. Fox (he/him), MS, PhD(c), LGPC**

*Prince George's County*



Anthony Fox, MS, PhD(c), LGPC, is the Division Chief at the DC Department of Health. He oversees the Capacity Building, Housing, and Community Partnerships Division within the HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD, and TB Administration. He is a proud resident of Prince George's County and brings 28 years of Public Health and Health Care experience to the Commission, with a focus on HIV Prevention and Care for 20 years. Previously, he served as Deputy Director for Chronic Disease at the Mississippi State Department of Health and as a Lead Trainer/Capacity Building Assistance Manager for the Mississippi

Prevention Training Center and Jackson State University. Anthony is affiliated with several professional organizations and has received numerous awards for his dedication to communities. Passionate about empowering African American and LGBTQIA+ communities, Anthony volunteers extensively and advocates for mental health alongside physical well-being. In his leisure, he enjoys travel, swimming, and movies.

**Dr. Nicole A. Hollywood (she/her)**

*Wicomico County*



Dr. Hollywood is a Professor in the Department of Business at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore where her areas of expertise are media uses and effects, student learning outcomes assessment, DEI, information literacy, culturally responsive practices, business education, and technological innovation. She received doctorate and master's degrees from Columbia University and earned a post-doctorate from Tulane University. She has authored over 40 peer-reviewed journal articles, as well as three books and several book chapters, and currently serves as Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Doctoral Studies.

In her free time, she provides her public relations and marketing skills pro bono to several nonprofits and advocacy organizations focused on social justice and reducing violence.

**Tina Grace Jones (she/her)**

*Talbot County*



Tina, a proud transgender, and pansexual woman who came out later in life, is the principal of Pride Advisory Services Group, LLC (PASG). PASG provides management, business development, and strategic planning services to small and medium-sized organizations. The foster parent of a nonbinary child who lost their life to suicide and a suicide survivor herself, she understands firsthand the impact of discrimination and hate. A fierce advocate for LGBTQIA+ equity, Tina is the co-founder, inaugural Chair, Secretary, and trans/nonbinary support group facilitator for Delmarva Pride Center, an Eastern Shore organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQIA+ residents. She serves on the board of FreeState Justice and in an advisory or board capacity for many other nonprofit and public organizations. In addition to her foster child, Tina is the proud parent of two adult children and lives with her wife and their three rescue dogs.

**Asher Kennedy (he/him)**

*Washington County*



Asher is a trans masculine representative from Washington County, Maryland. Born in LaPlata and raised in Hagerstown, he works towards equity and true affirmation of all Marylanders. He has served on the Board of Hagerstown Hopes since 2018, currently serving as Vice President and chair of the Trans Committee. Between his professional work as a Title I Liaison with Washington County Public Schools, his work with Hagerstown Hopes, and this esteemed panel of leaders from around the State, his dedication is to ensuring a better tomorrow for our youth and our State as a whole.

**Jabari Lyles (they/them)**

*Baltimore City*



Jabari is an unapologetically Black, fat, queer, trans and nonbinary educator, community organizer, and servant leader with 15+ years of experience advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights in Maryland. Jabari's former roles include Inaugural Executive Director of GLSEN Maryland, Board President and Acting Executive Director of The Pride Center of Maryland and Baltimore Pride, Chief Operating Officer and Senior Strategist at Baltimore Safe Haven, the inaugural Director and Senior Advisor of LGBTQ Affairs for the Office of the Mayor in Baltimore City, as well as a former elementary, middle and high school teacher in Baltimore's public and independent schools.

Jabari led the efforts to pass groundbreaking policies in Baltimore City, including the city's gender-neutral bathroom law, the City Schools' transgender student rights policy and the legislation to establish the Baltimore City Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs. Today, Jabari operates their own consulting practice providing LGBTQ inclusion training, guest speaking, facilitation and nonprofit technical assistance services to clients across the U.S.



**Dr. Stephen Martin (he/him), M.D.**

*Baltimore City*



Stephen, originally from Northern Virginia, obtained his undergraduate degree from the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, VA. Afterward, he worked with Habitat for Humanity in Louisiana, coordinating home construction for hurricane victims. Subsequently, he moved to Washington, D.C., and earned his medical degree from the Howard University College of Medicine. Completing his residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital, Stephen joined Johns Hopkins Community Physicians (JHCP) as an obstetrician, gynecologist, and assistant professor. Within JHCP, he has been instrumental in developing programs for gender-affirming care in the field of obstetrics and

gynecology. His clinical expertise extends to gender-affirming surgical care, with notable contributions in surgical technique, preventative screening, and trauma-informed care for gender-diverse patients. Stephen has received recognition for his outstanding contributions, including the Johns Hopkins Medicine Pride Month Achievers Award in 2021.

**Paula M. Neira (she/her), JD, RN, FAAN**

*Prince George's County*



Paula graduated with distinction from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1985. After leaving the Navy, she became a registered nurse, specializing in emergency nursing. She was the founding Clinical Program Director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Transgender Health. She currently serves as the Johns Hopkins Medicine Program Director of LGBTQ+ Equity and Education. A member of the Maryland bar since 2001, Paula helped lead efforts to repeal the Don't Ask, Don't Tell law and change military regulations to allow for transgender military service. In 2020, she was inducted as a Fellow into the American Academy of Nursing in recognition of her leadership in advancing diversity and inclusion both

in the United States Armed Forces and in healthcare. She is the first United States Service Academy graduate to achieve this honor in American nursing.

**Wendy Novak (she/her)**

*Carroll County*



Wendy is a devoted parent of three and serves as a research administrator at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. With a background in Psychology from UMBC and an MS in Accounting Information Systems from UMGC, Wendy is currently pursuing a Master of Science in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Leadership at UMB. In addition to her role at the university, she is an active Girl Scout Leader and a dedicated church volunteer. Wendy's advocacy work centers around promoting inclusion in local schools. Her efforts include presenting written and verbal testimonies at Board of Education meetings and to the State legislature. Wendy is passionate about

creating safe and inclusive environments for all students and is committed to fostering a sense of belonging within schools.

**M Valle Pease (they/she/ze)**

*Montgomery County*



M Valle Pease is a doctoral student in counseling psychology at the University of Maryland, College Park. They earned a Bachelor of Science with High Honors in psychology and minors in Asian American studies and public leadership at UMD. Supported by a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship award, their research program broadly explores race, gender, and sexuality and how systems and experiences of oppression contribute to mental health disparities, especially for LGBTQ+ and Asian American communities. They have engaged in research-based advocacy and teaching efforts to promote social and organizational change, especially around promoting trans

rights, culturally competent mental health services, and broader intersectional social justice. In the pursuit of equity, decolonization, and liberation, M's work seeks to bridge science with advocacy and activism efforts that tangibly improve conditions for marginalized communities.

**Mark Ridderhoff (he/him), LCSW-C**

*Baltimore City*



Mark boasts over 18 years as a dedicated psychotherapist, currently balancing roles at Congruent Counseling and his private practice, with a focus on LGBTQ+ populations. His service to the community garnered recognition from Baltimore City Mayor Brandon Scott, acknowledging his pivotal role in revitalizing PFLAG Baltimore, where he proudly serves as President. Mark's contributions extend to the Baltimore City Office of LGBTQ Affairs and the Health and Human Services Subcommittee in the prior mayoral administration. He's a University of Vermont graduate and received his clinical training at

Johns Hopkins Hospital. Mark's advocacy journey began in the mid-90s through agency diversity committees and later incorporating assessment, leadership, and advocacy at local and State levels. Mark remains a compassionate advocate and a vital force in fostering positive change in the community.

**Sarah Stern (she/they)**

*Baltimore City*



Sarah is a proud Two Spirit Citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and lives on the unceded lands of the Piscataway and Susquehannock Nations (Baltimore, Maryland). Sarah obtained their honors Bachelor of Arts degree in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and a concentration in Native American Studies from Columbia University in 2016. Sarah works in public health writing to support community-based health programming and sustainable initiatives led by Indigenous cultural strengths for both the Johns Hopkins Center for Indigenous Health as well as Native American LifeLines. Sarah co-led the planning council of the inaugural Eastern Two Spirit Gathering in

2023 and in their free time enjoys cooking and connecting with nature.

## Joseph Toolan (he/him)

*Anne Arundel County*



Joe is the Senior Manager of America the Beautiful for All Coalition Strategy and Development, focusing on conserving 30% of lands, waters, and oceans by 2030 for the benefit of frontline and communities of color. He has a background in philanthropy, community stewardship, behavior change, and capacity building. Joe earned his Bachelor's Degree in Geographical Sciences from the University of Maryland and an Executive Certificate in Nonprofit Management from Georgetown University. Born in Guatemala and adopted in the 90s, Joe, a queer, Latine, indigenous, transracial international adoptee, grew up in Maryland. He chairs Annapolis Pride, served as the first Chair of the

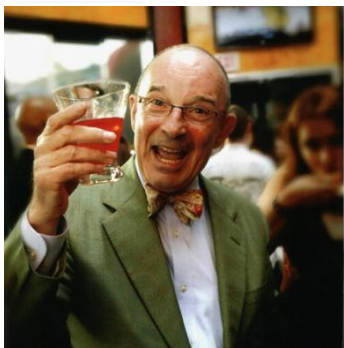
Maryland Commission for LGBTQIA+ Affairs (2022-2023), and is actively involved in various environmental and diversity initiatives, including the Naturally Latinos Conference, Chesapeake Watershed Forum, The Environmental Leadership Program (Senior Fellow) and the Young Professionals of Color program with the Choose Clean Water Coalition. He also serves on the board of Adoptees with Guatemalan Roots and Out for Sustainability.

## Honoring the Contributions of Departed Commissioners

In 2023, the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs saw the remarkable service of four dedicated commissioners who brought invaluable insights and advocacy to our work. We extend our deepest gratitude to **Sarcia Adkins (she/her)**, **Joseph M. Clapsaddle (he/him)**, **Margo Quinlan (she/they)**, and **Rowan Willis-Powell (she/they)** for their unwavering commitment to advancing equality, representation, and inclusion for LGBTQIA+ communities in Maryland. Their contributions have left an indelible mark on our efforts, and though they have resigned, their legacy of activism and dedication created a strong foundation for the Commission to better serve our queer and trans community members.

### In Memory of Joseph M. Clapsaddle

*November 20, 1940 - February 10, 2024*



We honor Joseph's lasting contributions to the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs. Serving on the Commission from November 2021 to February 2023 and as the inaugural Vice Chair in 2022, Joseph brought boundless dedication and unwavering support to the Commission's work. His commitment to the LGBTQIA+ community was reflected in his multifaceted career and civic engagements, exemplifying a spirit of service and resilience. Joseph's leadership, vast experience, and support of the Commission during its creation and inception helped forge a strong foundation for advancing LGBTQIA+ rights and representation in

Maryland. Despite facing tragic circumstances, Joseph's vibrant spirit and infectious laughter left an indelible mark on those who knew him, reminding us of the importance of finding joy even in challenging circumstances. We extend our deepest condolences to his loved ones as we remember Joseph's remarkable life and enduring legacy.

## Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs Staff

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs operates with a dedicated Director who is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Commission with approval and concurrence from the Governor. Adhering to the rules and policies set forth by the Commission and under the administrative oversight of the Governor, the Director is responsible for managing the Commission's activities and operations, including the appointment and dismissal of personnel. Situated within the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives, the Commission relies on the Director for primary staff support, alongside shared administrative support.

### **Jeremy Browning (he/him)**

*Director, Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs*



Jeremy Browning assumed his role as Director of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs in July 2022, following his appointment by the Commission and approval by the Governor. As the sole dedicated staff member, Jeremy oversees the day-to-day operations, facilitates all Commission and Committee meetings, and offers guidance to achieve the Commission's objectives. In his capacity, Jeremy serves as a vital advisor to the Governor's Office, Maryland General Assembly, and across State government, sharing recommendations and best practices for LGBTQIA+ inclusion established by the Commission.

With a background in community organizing, program development, project management, and strategic planning, Jeremy is deeply committed to fostering an equitable and affirming environment for LGBTQIA+ Marylanders. As the founder of Annapolis Pride Inc., he has championed initiatives to raise awareness of challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals, advocated tirelessly for inclusive policies, and united diverse communities through events and outreach. Jeremy's dedication to community engagement and advocacy extends through his expansive work in both nonprofit and public sectors, where he consistently strives for positive change and the uplifting of historically excluded voices.

### **Contact Information:**

Email: [jeremy.browning@maryland.gov](mailto:jeremy.browning@maryland.gov)

Phone: 410-697-9269

## **Section 2**

# **Challenges Facing LGBTQIA+ Communities in Maryland**

## Challenges Facing LGBTQIA+ Communities in Maryland

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs is charged with assessing challenges facing LGBTQIA+ communities in Maryland. The Commission's [2022 Annual Report](#) included national and State level data demonstrating challenges in almost every aspect of daily life from housing, healthcare, education, and employment, while living with increased risks of discrimination, harassment, and violence.

The sections below contain highlights and key findings from the latest reports that demonstrate the ongoing challenges LGBTQIA+ community members face, featuring data from national, State, and local levels.

### National Data



[The Early Insights: A Report of the 2022 U.S. Transgender Survey](#) was published by the **National Center for Transgender Equality**, includes data from 92,329 respondents and is the most comprehensive study examining the experiences of transgender people aged 16 and older. Key findings:

- **Trans people in the survey reported greater life satisfaction after transitioning.** Nearly all respondents (94%) who lived at least some of the time in a different gender than the one they were assigned at birth (“gender transition”) reported that they were either “a lot more satisfied” (79%) or “a little more satisfied” (15%) with their life.
- Nearly all respondents (98%) who were currently receiving hormone treatment reported that receiving hormones for their gender identity/transition made them either “a lot more satisfied” (84%) or a little more satisfied (14%) with their life.
- **Discriminatory policies cause real harm.** Nearly half (47%) of respondents had thought about moving to another state because their state government considered or passed laws that target transgender people for unequal treatment (such as banning access to bathrooms, health care, or sports), and 5% of respondents had actually moved out of state because of such state action.

## State Data

The [Maryland Trans Survey](#) is a community-based research project conducted by Trans Maryland and the Queer/Trans Collective for Research on Equity and Wellness to examine the experiences of trans people in the State of Maryland. To date, this is the largest of its kind in the State, encompassing 750 transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, and gender individuals from across all 23 counties and Baltimore City. Key findings:

- **Discrimination and Violence:** Trans people in Maryland experienced alarmingly high rates of violence and victimization.
  - 78.2% had experienced verbal insults or abuse at least once in their lives.
  - 55.4% had experienced threats of violence at least once in their lives.
  - 46.1% had experienced physical and/or sexual assault at least once in their lives.
- **Healthcare Access:** Despite high rates of health insurance coverage, challenges accessing healthcare persist, including affording care, finding transgender care providers and concerns about discrimination from healthcare professionals.
  - Among those who have wanted surgery, 85.2% have experienced barriers accessing it.
  - 78.8% worried about being negatively judged because of gender identity or sexual orientation when seeking healthcare.
  - 27.6% did not see a doctor when they needed to in the last year because of cost.
  - 31.6% had delayed or not tried to get treatment while sick or injured due to concerns about gender-related discrimination.
  - 34.5% had never been tested for HIV and 26.7% were not familiar with Truvada or Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP).
- **Economic Wellbeing:** Economic disparities were evident, with a significant portion of respondents experiencing financial crises and housing insecurity. Employment discrimination, including job denial and lack of promotions, was prevalent.
  - 22.7% had a major financial crisis leading to bankruptcy or inability to pay bills in the last year.
  - 2.3% did not currently have housing and 13.6% had been prevented from moving into a rental or buying a house at least once in their lives.
  - 30.9% were unemployed and looking for a job for a period longer than one month in the last year.
- **Legal Institutions:** Many Trans individuals faced challenges with legal documentation, including name and gender marker changes on IDs. Discomfort with police and reluctance to seek help in emergencies were widespread, often linked to experiences of discrimination.
  - 37.1% had no IDs or records that reflected the name that they use.

- 68.8% were not aware that Maryland has allowed people to waive the publication requirement for legal name changes since October 1, 2021.
- 51.2% had no IDs or records that reflected the correct gender and conversely, only 14.4% had the correct gender on all IDs or records.
- 75.1% reported being very uncomfortable or somewhat uncomfortable with potentially asking for help from the police in an emergency.
- 67.2% specified that discomfort with police was connected to their trans status/gender identity and 38.8% had bad experiences with the police in the past.

## Local Data

The [2023 Montgomery County LGBTQ+ Community Survey](#) was initiated by the **Montgomery County LGBTQ+ Advisory Group** to help County leadership establish a foundational understanding of the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals. Key findings:

- Most respondents, 74.3%, feel Montgomery County is a safe place for LGBTQ+ individuals, however nearly half, 44.9%, of respondents experienced discrimination with public spaces being a common location.
- Respondents feel most comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation and gender identity at home, while faith communities are least comfortable environments.
- To improve safety and inclusivity, respondents suggested increased visibility and resources, including LGBTQ+ community centers, healthcare access, and social services.
- Homelessness and housing instability are significant concerns, with one in eight respondents, 12.8%, had experienced homelessness at some point, while nearly one in six respondents reported difficulty finding housing or staying housed.
- Challenges accessing affirming medical and mental healthcare:
  - Over a quarter of respondents report having to teach their healthcare provider about their sexual orientation or gender identity to receive appropriate care.
  - 41.1% of respondents faced difficulty finding gender-affirming medical providers, while 41.8% experienced challenges accessing gender-affirming mental health support.
  - Nearly one-third of respondents said they have never been tested for HIV.
- A significant portion of respondents had interactions with law enforcement, with varying perceptions of the experiences, particularly among transgender, gender expansive and questioning individuals



**The Montgomery County Council's Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) published the [Transgender Healthcare in Montgomery County report](#) that examines the availability and accessibility of healthcare for transgender individuals in the County. Key findings:**

- The limited data on transgender health and healthcare in the United States show that transgender individuals are more likely overall to experience fair/poor health and had higher rates of serious psychological distress when compared with cisgender people. Transgender people also report significant rates of coverage denial for services related to being transgender.
- There are limited services for transgender individuals in Montgomery County. The County Government does not provide trans-specific services.
- The County's Department of Health and Human Services does not provide any trans-exclusive services – there is no traditional “gender-affirming” care.
- Nationally and locally, the biggest barrier to healthcare for transgender individuals is a lack of knowledge and training among healthcare providers to respectfully interact with and care for transgender patients. As a result, many individuals report having to travel great distances to see knowledgeable providers, or having to teach their providers about transgender healthcare.

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs is not aware of other county reports examining the availability and accessibility of gender-affirming care, and commends the Montgomery County Council's Office of Legislative Oversight for producing this report.

**The [Delmarva LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment](#) was conducted by Salisbury PFLAG and administered by a faculty member of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) and registered with the UMES Institutional Review Board. The survey was conducted online during the summer months of 2023 and received 283 responses from those living on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Southern Delaware. Key findings:**

- **Community Inclusiveness:** The average ranking of community inclusiveness for LGBTQIA+ individuals on the Eastern Shore was 54 out of 100, indicating room for improvement.
- **Satisfaction with Services:** While respondents were generally satisfied with access to local government and public services, they expressed dissatisfaction with safety, support for LGBTQIA+ families, and interactions with law enforcement.
- **Support for LGBTQIA+ Individuals:** Participants indicated dissatisfaction with support for various groups within the LGBTQIA+ community, especially transgender individuals and youth.
- **Healthcare Challenges:** There were consistent complaints about the lack of adequate medical care, particularly for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. Issues

included a shortage of providers, discrimination, long wait times, and limited access to gender-affirming care.

Based on the survey findings, it's evident that more work is needed to address the challenges faced by the LGBTQIA+ community on the lower Eastern Shore. Recommendations include:

- Enhancing support services for LGBTQIA+ individuals, families, and youth;
- Improving access to inclusive healthcare, including gender-affirming care;
- Advocating for safer environments in schools and communities; and
- Establishing dedicated LGBTQIA+ commissions or resources to address community needs effectively.

## **Section 3**

# **Policy Priorities, Recommendations, and Best Practices**

## **Policy Priorities, Recommendations, and Best Practices**

The Commission is mandated to study and establish recommendations and best practices for LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Additionally, the Commission shall provide testimony on issues concerning LGBTQIA+ individuals before legislative and administrative bodies. It should be noted that the Commission's policy positions do not necessarily reflect the positions and views of the Governor's Office or the State of Maryland.

The volunteer commissioners have been hard at work providing feedback from across the State, extensively researching challenges facing LGBTQIA+ communities, and offering solutions to better support queer and trans Marylanders. In 2023, the Commission unanimously adopted their first set of legislative policy priorities and two groundbreaking documents consisting of 2024 policy priorities, carefully crafted recommendations, and evidence-based best practices for LGBTQIA+ inclusion.

### **2023 Legislative Policy Priorities and Outcomes**

#### **Trans Health Equity Act**

The Trans Health Equity Act ([HB0283/SB0460](#)) was the top legislative priority for the Commission and requires the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide gender-affirming treatment in a nondiscriminatory manner. The Trans Health Equity Act passed both chambers and was signed into law by Governor Wes Moore on May 3, 2023 and (effective January 1, 2024).

#### **Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act**

The Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act ([HB0426/SB0761](#)) requires the Commissioner of Correction to report certain information regarding the gender identities, housing status of transgender, nonbinary, and intersex incarcerated individuals and provide important insights into their experiences while in custody of the State. While the Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act did not pass the House or Senate, the bill did result in reporting requirements on the experiences of incarcerated transgender individuals and the creation of an LGBTQIA+ Liaison position with the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services.

#### **Birth Certificate Modernization Act**

The Birth Certificate Modernization Act ([HB0361](#)) alters the circumstances under which the Secretary of Health is required to issue new birth certificates with updated sex designations and removes unnecessary barriers. The bill also ensures that individuals have the autonomy to self-identify their gender, and clarifies that the "X" gender marker is an option available to those who need it, bringing the State inline with other jurisdictions. The bill was introduced in the House and did not pass. The Birth Certificate Modernization Act is again a top priority for the Commission in 2024.

## **Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs - Alterations**

The Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs - Alterations ([SB0251/HB0141](#)) updates the name of the Commission to include “IA+”, increases the number of members from 15 to 21 members, expands certain qualifications for members appointed to the Commission, and staggers the terms of Commission members. The bills passed both chambers and were signed into law by Governor Wes Moore on April 11, 2023, and effective October 1, 2023.

## **2024 Policy Priorities, Recommendations, and Best Practices**

In November 2023, the Commission adopted [2024 Policy Priorities, Recommendations and Best Practices](#), which was created in collaboration with community members across the State to illuminate the challenges and opportunities facing the LGBTQIA+ community in Maryland. It is a 27-page document with a focus on intersectional LGBTQIA+ lived experiences and lays out the Commission’s positions on key issues, serving as a tool kit for State and local organizations, and other stakeholders. The document cites available data but also highlights the lack of local and accessible data on several issues, indicating an urgent need for data across all of the mentioned issue areas.

### **Top Priority: Funding and Resource Allocation**

Despite progress in recent years, challenges facing our LGBTQIA+ communities still persist. Urgent action is needed to address historic underinvestment and lack of access to affirming resources and services across the State. The Commission strongly urges increased funding and resource allocations to support State agencies as they create affirming policies, provide training and education for existing staff, participate in inclusive events and outreach, and acquire dedicated staffing.

Additionally, we recommend the creation of an LGBTQIA+ Fund to support grassroots organizations serving queer and trans communities. This would ensure vital support to groups that provide life-saving services to vulnerable community members and those seeking refuge in Maryland from less affirming states.

The Commission’s findings are arranged by issue area in alphabetical order to address the critical issues facing Maryland’s queer and trans community members. Sections include:

- Access to LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Resources
- Aging
- Athletics
- Bereavement
- Data
- Disability
- Discrimination and Hate Crimes
- Employment and Economic Stability
- Family Protections
- Food Security
- Funding and Resource Allocation
- Harm Reduction & Substance Use Programs
- Healthcare (and Mental Healthcare)
- HIV prevention and Treatment Access
- Housing and Homelessness

- ID Documents
- Immigration
- Interpersonal Violence
- Intersectionality
- Judicial System & Corrections
- Lack of LGBTQIA+ Cultural Humility and Competency
- Law Enforcement and First Responders
- LGBTQIA+ Organizations/ Pride Centers
- Racial Justice
- Religious Freedom
- Representation of LGBTQIA+ People in State Government
- Sanctuary Policies
- Sex Work
- Socioeconomic Inequality
- Transportation
- Veterans
- Youth & Education

## Recommendations for Supporting LGBTQIA+ Students

In September 2023, the Commission adopted, [Recommendations for Supporting LGBTQIA+ Students in Maryland's K-12 Schools](#), which presents worrisome data about the experiences of LGBTQIA+ youth in Maryland's schools. In addition to State and local data, the publication includes eight recommendations summarized below:

1. Develop and enact a statewide policy that protects transgender, nonbinary, and gender-expansive students from sex and gender-based discrimination in schools.
2. Require all public school educators to receive at least six (6) hours of live, annual professional development training about the needs and experiences of LGBTQIA+ students and families. Training should be delivered by facilitators with extensive personal and professional experience in educating about gender, sexuality, and identity.
3. Require an LGBTQIA+-inclusive curriculum to be taught as part of the State social studies and sexual education curriculum, and provide resources for developing LGBTQIA+-inclusive curricula for all other content areas and grade levels.
4. Outlaw book bans in school libraries and classrooms.
5. Provide resources for the establishment and growth of Gender Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) at all schools and in all grade levels.
6. Provide culturally relevant resources and support for parents, families, and caregivers to become supportive, affirming adults for LGBTQIA+ youth.
7. Collect statewide data regarding LGBTQIA+ youth in Maryland, including population size and experiences in public systems.
8. Hire a full-time team for LGBTQIA+ Student Achievement at the Maryland State Department of Education.
9. Draft and publish an update to the 2015 MSDE Guidance Document entitled, "Providing Safe Spaces for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth: Guidelines for Gender Identity Non-Discrimination," in collaboration with a paid workgroup comprised of students, families, and community members.

## 2024 Legislative Policy Priorities

The sections below list priority bills for which the Commission recommended favorable or unfavorable reports, as aligned with the 2024 Policy Priorities, Best Practices and Recommendations, and Recommendations for Supporting LGBTQIA+ Students documents. These documents were adopted unanimously by the Commission at the November 2023 and September 2023 meetings respectively.

✓ = Passed

✗ = Did not pass

### FAVORABLE BILLS:

- ✗ [HB 297](#)/✓ [SB 134](#) - Correctional Ombudsman - Establishment and Funding
- ✗ [HB485](#)/✗ [SB1165](#) Public Health - Prohibition on Transfer of Human Immunodeficiency Virus - Repeal
- ✗ [HB 50](#) - Commission on History Culture & Civics
- ✗ [HB691](#)/✓ [SB119](#) - Legally Protected Health Care - Gender-Affirming Treatment
- ✓ [HB785](#)/✓ [SB738](#) - Freedom to Read Act (Bill to prevent book banning in schools)
- ✓ [HB 602](#) - Employment Discrimination – Sexual Orientation
- ✗ [HB558](#) - Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established
- ✗ [SB0189](#) - Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts - Development of Content Standards and Implementation
- ✓ [HB 577](#)/✓ [SB 1107](#) - Housing and Community Development - Study on the Establishment of a Homeless Shelter Licensing Program
- ✓ [HB1397](#)/✗ [SB0590](#) - Human Relations - Discrimination - Protected Characteristics (Equal Opportunity for All Marylanders Act)
- ✓ [HB0127](#)/✗ [SB0246](#) - Public Health - Nonoccupational Postexposure Prophylaxis (nPEP) Standing Order Program - Establishment

### UNFAVORABLE BILLS:

- ✗ [HB 25](#) - Public Schools - Sexually Explicit Materials - Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers
- ✗ [HB 47](#)/✗ [SB 381](#) - Education - Interscholastic and Intramural Junior Varsity and Varsity Teams - Designation Based on Sex (Fairness In Girls' Sports Act)
- ✗ [HB 722](#) - Health - Minors - Gender and Sex Transition Procedures
- ✗ [HB 65](#) - Public Schools - Medical and Psychological Treatment in School-Based Health
- ✗ [HB553](#)/✗ [SB438](#) - Family Law - Fundamental Parental Rights
- ✗ [HB1430](#) - Education - Public Schools - Parents' Rights (Education Bill of Rights for Families Act)
- ✗ [HB671](#)/✗ [SB355](#) - Criminal Law - Display of Obscene Material to Minors - Prohibition

## General Recommendations and Best Practices for All State Agencies

The Commission has made specific recommendations and identified best practices for LGBTQIA+ inclusion for all State agencies. The Commission is eager to assist State agencies in implementation and looks forward to sharing agency progress in the next annual report. The eight recommendations are summarized below:

- 1. Inclusive Policies:** Ensure that all staff and members of the public are aware of the State of Maryland's non-discrimination laws, and review and update internal and external policies, procedures, and guidelines to ensure LGBTQIA+ inclusion.
- 2. Training and Professional Development:** Require at least six hours of mandatory LGBTQIA+ cultural humility and competency training for new and existing State employees annually.
- 3. Programming and Events:** Recognize and celebrate LGBTQIA+ dates such as Pride Month, Transgender Day of Visibility, etc. through inclusive communications, programming, support groups, and events (e.g., as a statewide LGBTQIA+ symposium).
- 4. Community Engagement:** Create regularly scheduled outreach opportunities to address concerns specific to LGBTQIA+ clients, especially historically excluded groups such as transgender, nonbinary, People of Color, and disabled LGBTQIA+ individuals.
- 5. External LGBTQIA+ Resources:** Create an LGBTQIA+ access plan to provide affirming and accessible resources and services to LGBTQIA+ Marylanders.
- 6. Staffing:** Each State agency should have funded and resourced positions to connect LGBTQIA+ individuals to services provided by the State.
- 7. Funding:** Allocate or advocate for a specified budget for LGBTQIA+ initiatives. This funding will cover staff salaries, training programs, community outreach, events, and other resources.
- 8. Data Collection:** Include questions about sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexual characteristics (SOGISC) in State surveys to better understand the challenges and needs of LGBTQIA+ communities.



# **Section 4**

## **Data From State Agencies**

## Data From State Agencies

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs is mandated to collect data from State agencies on complaints alleging discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The following reports include data on hate/bias complaints and/or information on the experiences of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders:

### Annual Statewide Equal Employment Opportunity Report

The Maryland Department of Budget and Management publishes the Annual Statewide Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) report prepared by the Office of the Statewide EEO Coordinator (OSEEOC), which is charged with administering and enforcing the State's EEO Program in accordance with the State's equal employment and non-discrimination laws.

The State of Maryland is an equal opportunity employer and prohibits discrimination in any personnel action concerning any employee or job applicant for employment based on age, ancestry, color, creed, genetic information, gender identity and expression, marital status, mental or physical disability, national origin, race, religious affiliation, belief or opinion, sex, or sexual orientation.

**Submit complaint and view reports** to the Office of the Statewide Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinator online at: <https://dbm.maryland.gov/eoo/pages/eeohome.aspx>

Recent Reports:

- [2023 Maryland EEO Report](#)
- [2022 Maryland EEO Report](#)
- [2021 Maryland EEO Report](#)

### State of Maryland Hate Bias Report

The Maryland Department of State Police (MDSP) in partnership with The Maryland Coordination & Analysis Center, publishes the State of Maryland Hate Bias Report annually. The report includes data from law enforcement agencies within the State of Maryland and the Office of the State Fire Marshal on actions/comments seemingly directed against an individual or group because of race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, disability, national origin, or homelessness.

Recent Reports:

- [MD 2022 Hate Bias Report](#)
- [MD 2021 Hate Bias Report](#)
- [MD 2020 Hate Bias Report](#)

## Bias Motivation

The 2022 Hate Bias Report includes bias motivations which are displayed in the figures below:

### Bias Motivation

From 2021 to 2022, R/E/A\* bias motivations increased 12.7% from 276 to 311. Anti-Religion bias motivations increased by over 84.5% during the same period from 57 to 105.

Between 2020 - 2022, R/E/A\* bias motivations comprised the majority of all hate bias motivations followed by Religion and Sexual Orientation.

\* Race/Ethnicity/Ancestry

Category	Verified			All Reports		
	2020	2021	2022	2020	2021	2022
R/E/A*	85	75	79	293	276	311
Religion	12	9	18	63	57	105
Sexual Orientation	15	15	24	36	59	68
Disability	0	0	0	0	0	2
Gender	0	0	1	2	0	2
Gender Identity	2	3	6	5	9	15
Homelessness	1	1	2	1	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>506</b>

Figure 6: Three-year comparison of verified incidents by bias motivation compared to all incidents by bias motivation is shown here. Incidents can have more than one bias motivation. This accounts for differences between bias motivation numbers and the total number of incidents reported.

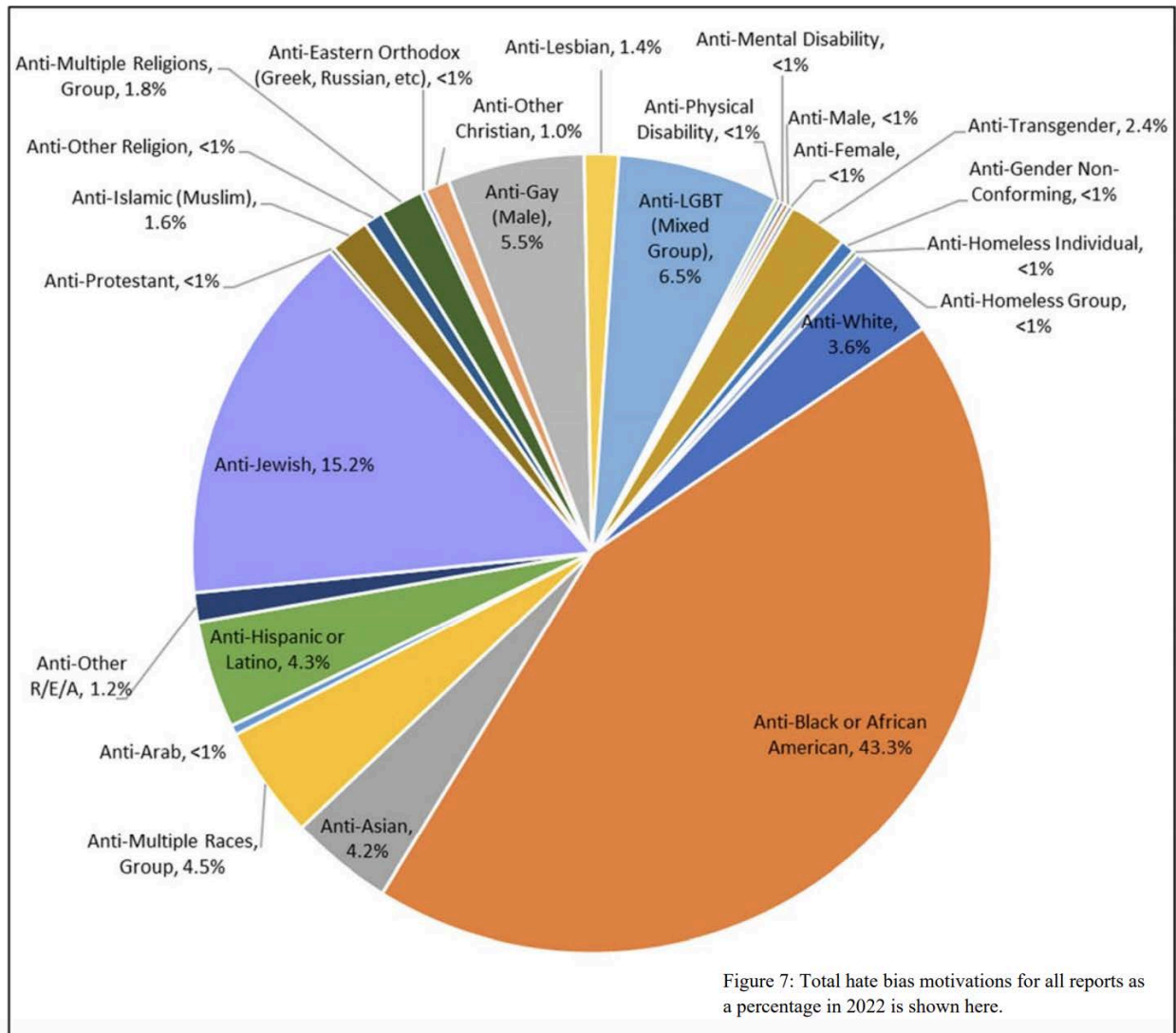


Figure 7: Total hate bias motivations for all reports as a percentage in 2022 is shown here.

## **Maryland Commission on Civil Rights**

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) is charged with enforcing Maryland's anti-discrimination laws in employment, housing, public accommodations, and State contracts; providing educational outreach services related to provisions of this law; and promoting and improving civil rights in Maryland.

**File a Complaint with MCCR** - If you believe you have been a victim of discrimination, you are encouraged to visit the MCCR website to submit a complaint:

<https://mccr.maryland.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

MCCR publishes an annual report which includes a summary and breakdown of complaints received including bias motivation, county, and type of complaint.

Recent Reports:

- [MCCR 2023 Annual Report](#)
- [MCCR 2022 Annual Report](#)
- [MCCR 2021 Annual Report](#)

## **Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services**

The Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) operates 19 institutions, including several pretrial facilities, as well as 42 Parole and Probation offices throughout the State.

### **Treatment of Transgender Incarcerated Individuals Report**

The Treatment of Transgender Incarcerated Individuals Report was required to be published by DPSCS by the 2023 Maryland General Assembly's Joint Chairmen's Report following concerns that incarcerated transgender individuals are subjected to high rates of sexual abuse and violence, placed in inappropriate housing assignments, such as unwarranted restrictive housing.

View the DPSCS report on the [Treatment of Incarcerated Transgender Individuals here](#).

# **Section 5**

## **Events & Outreach**

## 2023 Events & Outreach

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs commissioners and staff participated in over 37 events to celebrate our progress, advocate for inclusive policies, and engage LGBTQIA+ and allied communities throughout the State. Additionally, commissioners and staff attended numerous meetings, conferences, and forums to assess and share community needs, and acknowledge LGBTQIA+ days of significance.

The Commission has the privilege and honor of recognizing outstanding work from advocates and organizations with proclamations and citations on behalf of the Governor. Community members and organizations can [request a proclamation or citation](#) at least 45 days before the date needed.

### By the Numbers

- 17 Pride Celebrations
- 2 Pride Flag Raising Ceremonies
- 3 Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies
- 15+ Forums, Conferences, Tours, and other Events
- 10+ Commission Presentations
- 6 Commission Meetings
- 15 Committee Meetings

### Events and Outreach Highlights

#### February 14, 2023 - LGBTQ+ Legislative Caucus Rally in Support of the Trans Health Equity Act - Annapolis, Anne Arundel County

The newly formed Maryland General Assembly LGBTQ+ Legislative Caucus hosted a rally in support of Trans Health Equity Act (HB283/SB460) on Lawyers Mall with several LGBTQIA+ nonprofits and advocacy groups including the Transgender Rights Advocacy Coalition (TRAC), Maryland Safe Haven (formerly Baltimore Safe Haven), Trans Maryland, and FreeState Justice. The Commission provided written and oral testimony on HB283/SB460 and their priority bills throughout the 2023 Legislative Session which was held from January 11, 2023 to April 10,



2023. The Trans Health Equity Act was signed into law by Governor Wes Moore on May 3, 2023 and went into effect on January 1, 2024.

*Photo: Dozens of advocates, lawmakers, allies and community members gather on Lawyers Mall.*

**March 31, 2023 - Governor's Proclamation Ceremony: International Transgender Day of Visibility - Annapolis, Anne Arundel County**

A ceremony and first-ever proclamation to recognize International Transgender Day of Visibility in Maryland was held in the Governor's Reception Room in the State Capitol. This historic and joyous event was organized in partnership with the Governor's Office and the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, and witnessed by over 100 community members, lawmakers, advocates, and allies. The program included Delegate Fair's Chief of Staff, Ronnie Taylor (she/her), as the MC, and speakers: Commissioner Lee Blinder (they/them), Founder and Executive director of Trans Maryland, now Commissioner August Clayton (any pronouns) Founder and Sustainability Lead of Mosaic, Iya Dammons (she/they) Founder and Executive Director of Maryland Safe Haven (formerly Baltimore Safe Haven), and Jamie Grace Alexander (she/they), advocate and member of the Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition. [A recording of the full proclamation ceremony can be found here.](#)



*Photo: Attendees gather around Governor Wes Moore, Lt. Governor Aruna Miller, and Secretary of State Susan Lee immediately following the signing of the proclamation.*

**March 31, 2023 - LifeBridge Health AffirmCare Ribbon Cutting Ceremony - Towson, Baltimore County**

**April 14, 2023 - Caroline Pride Ribbon Cutting Ceremony - Denton, Caroline County**

**April 19, 2023 - Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Diversity Event - Westminster, Carroll County**

**May 6, 2023 - Howard County Public School System Rainbow Conference Resource Fair - Ellicott City, Howard County**

**May 16, 2023 - National Honor Our LGBTQ+ Elders Day - Baltimore City**

**May 20, 2023 - Charles County Pride Festival - White Plains, Charles County**

**May 27, 2023 - Caroline County Pride - Denton, Caroline County**

**June 1, 2023 - LGBTQIA+ Pride Month Flag Raising Ceremonies - Greenbelt, Prince George's County & Ellicott City, Howard County**

**June 3, 2023 - Baltimore Trans Pride - Baltimore City**

**June 3, 2023 - Annapolis Pride Parade & Festival - Annapolis, Anne Arundel County**

**June 4, 2023 - Cumberland Pride - Cumberland, Allegany County**

**June 5, 2023 - Governor's Pride Reception - Annapolis, Anne Arundel County**

The Governor's Office, in partnership with the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, hosted the first-ever LGBTQIA+ Pride Reception at Government House. During the reception, Governor Wes Moore signed an [executive order](#) to protect those receiving and providing gender affirming care in Maryland.



*Photo courtesy of the Executive Office of the Governor: From left to right: Director Jeremy Browning, Commissioners Margo Quinlan, Mark Ridderhoff, Lee Blinder, Governor Wes Moore, Commissioners Joe Toolan, Debb Dunn, Mickey Dhir, Kurt Doan, and Stephen Martin.*

**June 17, 2023 - Crofton Pride Parade & Festival, Crofton, Anne Arundel County**

**June 17, 2023 - Delmarva Pride Festival - Easton, Talbot County**

**June 24, 2023 - Frederick Pride - Frederick, Frederick County**

**June 24, 2023 - Salisbury Pride Parade and Festival - Salisbury, Wicomico County**



**June 24, 2023 - Baltimore Pride Parade - Baltimore City**

Governor Wes Moore, Lt. Governor Aruna Miller, numerous elected officials, and commissioners from the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs marched in the Baltimore Pride Parade.



*Photo courtesy of the Executive Office of the Governor.*

**June 25, 2023 - Pride in the Plaza - Silver Spring, Montgomery County**

**July 8, 2023 - Hagerstown Pride - Hagerstown, Washington County**

**July 8, 2023 - Westminster Pride - Westminster, Carroll County**

**July 29, 2023 - Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs Strategic Planning Retreat - Crownsville, Anne Arundel County**



*From left to right: Commissioners Anthony Fox, Stephen Martin, Mickey Dhir, Jabari Lyles, Debb Dunn, Kurt Doan, Joan Bryan, Mark Ridderhoff, Lee Blinder, Joe Toolan, and Director Jeremy Browning.*

**September 8, 2023 - Maryland Safe Haven Tour - Baltimore City**

Governor Wes Moore and Lt. Governor Aruna Miller toured Maryland Safe Haven (formerly Baltimore Safe Haven), which provides transitional housing and services to Maryland's transgender community. The visit was made in partnership with the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs and provided an opportunity to tour the organization's housing facilities, learn about their services, meet with residents, and participate in a discussion about the needs of transgender Marylanders.



*Photo courtesy of the Executive Office of the Governor.*

**September 19, 2023- Central Maryland Hate Bias Reporting Forum - Germantown, Montgomery County**

**September 27, 2023 - Maryland Recreation and Parks Association 2SLGBTQIA+ Summit - Annapolis, Anne Arundel County**

**October 7, 2023 - Upper Chesapeake Bay Pride - Havre De Grace, Harford County**

**October 8, 2023 - Pride SoMD (Southern Maryland) - Lexington Manor Park, St. Mary's County**

**October 11, 2023 - Delmarva Pride Center Ribbon Cutting Ceremony - Easton, Talbot County**

**October 14, 2023 - Laurel Pride Day - Laurel, Prince George's County**

**October 15, 2023 - Howard County Pride Festival - Columbia, Howard County**

**October 20, 2023 - Baltimore Blaq Pride Icon Awards - Baltimore City**

**October 27, 2023 - University of Maryland Women's Forum - Shady Grove, Montgomery County**

**November 3, 2023 - Hearts and Ears Tour - Baltimore City**

**November 15, 2023 - Interprofessional Symposium on Transgender Care and Experience - Salisbury, Wicomico County**

**November 19, 2023 - Transgender Day of Remembrance Vigil - Baltimore City**

**December 9, 2023 - GOCI Commissioner Welcome and On-Boarding - Crownsville, Anne Arundel County**

All commissions within the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives (GOCI) were invited to attend a day-long welcome and onboarding to learn more about the Administration's priorities, State policies, and network across regions and commissions.



*Photo courtesy of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives: From left to right: Commissioner Anthon Fox, Director Jeremy Browning, Commissioners Debb Dunn and Tina Jones, GOCI Executive Director Larry Walker, Commissioners Joan Bryan, Mark Ridderhoff, M Pease, Joe Toolan, and Sarah Stern.*

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## **2023 Annual Report**

Published: April 2024

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on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**