Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

Meeting Minutes
September 8, 2025
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Zoom Virtual Meeting

Commissioners Present:

Lee Blinder, Chair
M Pease, Vice Chair
Joan Bryan
Mickey Dhir
Kurt Doan
Debb Dunn
Anthony Fox
Nicole Hollywood
Asher Kennedy
Stephen Martin
Paula Neira
Wendy Novak
Brandon Russell
Sarah Stern
Joe Toolan
Ly Xīnzhèn Zhǎngsūn

Commissioners Not Present:

Ali K.C. Bell
Josie Caballero

Staff Present:

Jeremy Browning, Director, Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs
Taylor Harer, Special Assistant, Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to Order by Chair Blinder at 6:03 PM. Housekeeping and Meeting Guidelines were read and acknowledged. Commissioners were reminded to add their pronouns to their Zoom names and instructions were provided.

II. Roll Call: Roll call was conducted by Chair Blinder and they provided a review of the voting procedures using the Zoom reaction functions to indicate vote.

III. Agenda Approval: Chair Blinder presented the agenda for the meeting for an open forum for general remarks or comments. The agenda on the slide was corrected to match the official agenda. After hearing no additional comments, the agenda was approved utilizing unanimous consent.

IV. Approval - Previous Meeting Minutes: The minutes from the May 12, 2025 meeting and July 19, 2025 Strategic Planning Retreat were presented to the Commission. There were no additions or objections from the Commission and the minutes were approved via unanimous consent.

V. Reports:

A. Chair Report: Chair Blinder began by recognizing the difficult climate the community is facing and the strain it causes. They expressed gratitude for everyone's presence and efforts, emphasized the importance of mutual care and connection, and acknowledged both the challenges and successes. They highlighted the Commission's dedication and the collective strength in supporting the community.

B. Vice Chair Report: Vice Chair Pease echoed Chair Blinder's remarks and shared that the reports from the 2023 Maryland Trans Survey had been released in collaboration with Trans Maryland, and invited members to use the findings in their work. They offered support and consultation related to research and expressed gratitude for the group's leadership.

C. Directors Report: Director Browning reported on upcoming activities, including the September 16, 2025 Communications Working Group meeting, the November 10, 2025 Commission meeting, and fall Pride events. He welcomed new commissioner Tica Torres, whose appointment begins next month. He noted two hate bias forums scheduled for September 20, 2025 and October 11, 2025 and closed with a reminder of the Commission's mandates.

VI. Update: Community Needs Assessment - Commissioner Hollywood reported on the Community Needs Assessment, thanking everyone who contributed. Pending IRB approval, the survey is expected to launch within the next few weeks. The Director and Commission Chair commended Commissioner Hollywood and the team for their significant work, noting the collective effort and emphasizing the importance of the assessment in providing critical data to support policy goals.

VII. Discussion: 2026 Preliminary Legislative Priorities - The Commission discussed preliminary legislative priorities for 2026. Commissioners discussed the likelihood of bills being reintroduced and the idea of contacting bill sponsors ahead of the 2026 legislative session. A motion was made by Commissioner Fox to adopt the 2026 Preliminary Legislative Priorities document. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hollywood and it was passed with all in favor.

VIII. Discussion: Sign on Letter: The People's Declaration - The Commission reviewed the People's Declaration, a coalition letter shared by AIDS Action Baltimore addressing cuts to U.S. HIV research. The letter emphasizes centering impacted communities, inclusion, ethical standards, and DEI in research. A motion was made by Commissioner Zhǎngsūn to have the Commission sign onto the letter in support. It was seconded by Commissioner Bryan and passed with nay votes from commissioners Russell and Niera.

IX. Discussion: Statement on Federal Attacks - Director Browning provided an overview of the draft statements presented for consideration. The draft statements combined input from both the Policy Committee and the Health and Wellness Committee. Commissioner Dhir clarified that he created the draft "Version 2" with simplified language and improved readability for public accessibility. Commissioners reviewed suggestions and agreed that a more concise, actionable version would be most effective. A motion was made to adopt "Version 2" by Commissioner Russell and seconded by Commissioner Bryan. The motion passed with all in favor.

X. Open Forum for General Remarks or Comments: Commissioners made announcements and shared events and community concerns.

XI. Closing Remarks: Chair Blinder closed the meeting by expressing gratitude for the Commissioners’ hard work, encouraging self-care, and reminding members to appreciate positive developments in the community.

XII. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 7:12 by Chair Blinder

Minutes respectfully submitted by: Special Assistant, Taylor Harer