



Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

Meeting Minutes
November 10, 2025
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Zoom Virtual Meeting

Commissioners Present:

Lee Blinder, Chair
M Pease, Vice Chair
Ali K.C. Bell
Joan Bryan
Josie Caballero
Mickey Dhir
Kurt Doan
Debb Dunn

Anthony Fox
Asher Kennedy
Paula Neira
Wendy Novak
Brandon Russell
Sarah Stern
Joe Toolan
Ly Xīnzhèn Zhǎngsūn

Commissioners Not Present:

Nicole Hollywood
Stephen Martin

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 6:04 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 general remarks or comments. After hearing no additional comments, the Chair entertained a motion for approval. Commissioner Bryan made the motion and Commissioner Novak seconded. The agenda was approved with all in favor.

IV. Reports:

- A. Chair Report: Chair Blinder delivered a brief report, congratulating Pride Southern Maryland on its recent event and acknowledging the ongoing challenges facing LGBTQIA+ community. They urged commissioners to prioritize rest and self-care given the intensity of current conditions. They also shared federal updates: the Supreme Court declined to revisit *Obergefell*, but issued a harmful ruling in *Orr v. Trump* restricting accurate gender markers on passports. They concluded by encouraging community members to obtain passports despite inaccuracies for safety reasons.
- B. Vice Chair Report: Due to the Vice Chair's absence, the Vice Chair Report was skipped.
- C. Director's Report: Director Browning reported on the progress of the Community Needs Assessment, which has nearly 900 responses and remains open until December 1. He thanked Commissioner Hollywood for securing IRB approval and encouraged continued sharing of the survey to reach at least 1,000 responses. He acknowledged Veterans Day and thanked veteran commissioners. He also reviewed upcoming Transgender Day of Remembrance events, inviting commissioners to submit additional listings and coordinate attendance. Chair Blinder emphasized the importance of events that highlight trans joy and community connection. Director Browning closed with a reminder of the Commission's core mandates and the need to prepare for the upcoming legislative session.

V. Consent Calendar:

- A. Director Browning introduced the new consent calendar process, explaining that it groups routine items into a single vote to help streamline meetings while still allowing any item to be removed for discussion.
- B. Chair Blinder reviewed the consent calendar items, including September 8 minutes, 2026 meeting dates, and support for the Maryland Protections for Providers and Patients sign-on letter. After confirming that no commissioners wished to remove any items, a motion was made by Commissioner Zhāngsūn to approve the consent calendar and it was seconded by Commissioner Bell. With no further discussion, the Commission voted unanimously to approve all items on the consent calendar.

VI. Election: 2026 Chair and Vice Chair: Director Browning facilitated the elections. The candidates were each given 2 minutes to briefly speak on their desire to act as Chair and Vice Chair for calendar year 2026. Chair Blinder and Vice Chair Pease spoke to the Commission, both expressing their gratitude and desire to continue their work as Chair and Vice Chair respectively. Both Chair Blinder and Vice Chair Pease were elected unanimously to continue serving the Commission as Chair and Vice Chair for the calendar year 2026.

VII. Discussion: Fiscal Sponsor - SPM Disability Justice Fund: The Commission discussed pursuing fiscal sponsorship through the SPM Disability Justice Fund, an option introduced by Commissioner Zhāngsūn, with their board affiliation noted for transparency. Director Browning explained that fiscal sponsorship would offer a temporary, more flexible way to receive donations and manage funds until an affiliated foundation can be created through legislation. Commissioners asked questions about fund management, the development of responsibilities, and practical

fundraising scenarios. Director Browning emphasized that fiscal sponsorship would simplify donations, allow tax receipts, and provide financial flexibility beyond the Commission's operating budget. After discussion, a motion was made to move forward with submission of the application by Commissioner Fox. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bryan and passed with an abstention from Commissioner Zhāngsūn.

VIII. Discussion: Updates to 2026 Legislative Policy Priorities. Vice Chair Pease reported that the Policy Committee is finalizing recommendations for the Commission's 2026 legislative priorities. Additionally policy priorities were discussed and the following actions were taken:

A. Commissioner Zhāngsūn made motion to adopt the updates to the 2026 legislative policy priorities listed below and was seconded by Commissioner Russell. The motions passed unanimously.

1. Add to Favorable Bills to Watch:

- a) 2025 HB1521: State Board of Social Work - Membership and Examination Requirements
- b) Support legislation to prohibit or phase out local 287(g) immigration enforcement agreements in Maryland

2. Add to Unfavorable Bills: Any Bill targeting State distribution of funds to nonprofit organizations

B. Commissioners also noted a separate urgent need for advocacy around SNAP payment disruptions and expiring healthcare subsidies. Commissioner Kennedy made a motion that the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs publicly advocate for emergency measures, similar to those taken in 2020 (including eviction freezes, utility shutoff freezes, and related protections), to safeguard people impacted by the SNAP freeze, the federal shutdown, and the expiration of health care subsidies. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Russell and the motion was unanimously passed.

IX. Discussion: Legislative Reception: The Commission discussed holding a two-hour legislative reception in late January or early February to share its 2026 priorities with lawmakers and community partners. With broad consensus and no objections, the Commission directed staff to move forward with planning the event and to keep commissioners updated as details develop.

X. Discussion: Draft Communications Policy: Director Browning reported that the Communications Work Group has drafted a policy and strategy document for the Commission's newsletter and social media accounts. Commissioners were asked to review the draft and provide feedback by December 1. The group will meet in early December, aiming to launch communications in January.

XI. Open Forum for Announcements or Comments:

A. Commissioner Doan reported a successful appeal to the State Board of Education after the Hartford County Board of Education removed the LGBTQIA+ book *Flamer* from school libraries, marking the first use of Maryland's Freedom to Read Act for an LGBTQIA+ book. Doan noted the county board may appeal and he encouraged community responses.

- B. Commissioner Russell shared highlights from Pride Southern Maryland, thanking attendees and celebrating community engagement despite scheduling challenges.
 - C. Vice Chair Pease made brief remarks regarding the Community Needs Survey closing on December 1, 2025.
- XII. Closing Remarks: Chair Blinder thanked commissioners for electing them and expressed their commitment to serving both the Commission and the community in the upcoming year. They acknowledged the challenges of the past year, emphasized the importance of self-care to prevent burnout, and expressed gratitude for the commissioners' ongoing dedication and collaboration.
- XIII. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 7:46 by Chair Blinder
- XIV. Minutes respectfully submitted by: Special Assistant, Taylor Harer