



Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

Meeting Minutes
February 9, 2026
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Zoom Virtual Meeting

Commissioners Present:

Lee Blinder, Chair
M Pease, Vice Chair
Joan Bryan
Josie Caballero
Kurt Doan
Debb Dunn
Anthony Fox
Nicole Hollywood
Asher Kennedy
Courtney Mariette

Paula Neira
Wendy Novak
Brandon Russell
Jeffrey Slavin
Sarah Stern
Joe Toolan
Tica Torres-Bolivar
Phillip Westry
Ly Xīnzhèn Zhǎngsūn

Commissioners Not Present:

Mickey Dhir
Stephen Martin

Staff and Guests Present:

Jeremy Browning, Director, Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs
Taylor Harer, Special Assistant, Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs
Charlotte Persephone Hoffman, Policy Committee Advisor

- I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to Order by Chair Blinder at 6:02 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. Additionally, Chair Blinder 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. Hearing none, the agenda was approved via unanimous consent.

IV. Reports:

- A. Chair Report: Chair Lee Blinder opened by noting it is the Maryland legislative session and an especially busy time, with many members working on testimony and encouraging community participation. They reminded the group that the commission is mandated to provide testimony to legislative bodies and thanked the Commission for their work and service. After brief personal remarks and appreciation, the chair kept comments short and turned the meeting over to the vice chair.
 - B. Vice Chair Report: Vice Chair Pease reported having no major updates and noted they would share more later in the agenda. They encouraged support for local arts by recommending a musical currently showing in Olney, Maryland, and shared a personal update about preparing to defend their dissertation, inviting members to attend. They closed by expressing appreciation for the group and wishing everyone moments of care and connection before returning the floor to the director.
 - C. Director's Report: Director Browning gave brief administrative updates, reminding members that 2025 financial disclosures are due by April 30 and offering help through the Ethics Commission if needed. He noted committees are mostly on hiatus during the peak legislative session, but requested members to indicate their committee preferences, and committed to providing an updated list following the meeting. He also asked members to complete the strategic planning retreat scheduling poll, confirmed the next commission meeting on March 9, and referenced prior review of the commission's mandates before returning the floor to the chair.
- V. Approval: January 12, 2026 Meeting Minutes - There were no additions or corrections to the minutes and they were approved via unanimous consent.
- VI. Updates: 2026 Legislative Session - Policy Chair Caballero provided an update on the 2026 legislative session, noting that the Policy Committee is meeting weekly to track bills and update priorities as deadlines approach. The Commission reviewed new and ongoing legislative concerns, including a trans sports ban, removal of LGBTQIA+ library materials, HB1011 to establish a transgender student workgroup, and bills regarding public records requirements for certain nonprofits.
- Additionally, the Commission reviewed a slate of bills to add the 2026 Legislative Policy Priorities. Commissioner Fox made a motion to approve the additions to the 2026 Legislative Policy Priorities as presented. It was seconded by Policy Chair Caballero. There was no further discussion and the motion passed with an abstention from Commissioner Slavin.
- VII. Discussion: CMS Proposed Rules - Public Comments - There was a discussion about submitting public comments on two CMS proposed federal rules and the 60 day public comment period. Director Browning requested feedback from the Commission on the presented comments by February 12 to allow time to incorporate for the submission deadline on February 17.
- VIII. Discussion: Updates to Recommendations to Support LGBTQIA+ Students - Committee Chair Kennedy presented the Youth and Education Working Group's updated Recommendations for Supporting LGBTQIA+ Students in Maryland schools.

The revisions build on the 2023 recommendations, incorporating new data, recent legal and policy changes, and community feedback to make the guidance more practical and implementable. Key updates include consideration of the passage of the Freedom to Read Act, revised MSDE guidance, health curriculum changes, and improved Maryland-specific data collection, with clearer expectations, defined competencies, and distinctions between statewide and local responsibilities.

Committee Chair Kennedy made a motion to approve the Recommendations to Support LGBTQIA+ Students document as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Dunn. After hearing no further discussion, the motion passed with an abstention from Commissioner Slavin.

- IX. Discussion: LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment Preliminary Findings Report - Vice Chair Pease presented the report, which compiled quantitative and qualitative data from over 1,200 respondents representing all 24 Maryland jurisdictions. The findings highlighted key areas such as community connection, healthcare access, safety and experiences of hate violence, mental health, navigation of state systems, and awareness of legal protections, while also noting gaps, including low familiarity with existing policies and underreporting of incidents.

Commissioner Torres-Bolivar made a motion to adopt the LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment Preliminary Findings Report. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bryan. After hearing no further discussion, the motion was passed with an abstention from Commissioner Slavin.

- X. Open Forum for Announcements or Comments:

- A. Director Browning noted that meeting materials and updates would be posted on the Commission's website promptly for public access, with an email to follow containing the relevant links.
- B. Chair Blinder shared that Trans Maryland holds weekly policy meetings on Wednesdays, with an extended session this week for testimony writing, and provided the link in the chat.
- C. Commissioner Toolan added that the peace walk by monks traveling from Texas to DC will extend to Annapolis with a demonstration at the State House on Thursday at 10 a.m., encouraging those in the area to attend.

- XI. Closing Remarks: Chair Blinder adjourned the meeting, thanking commissioners for their dedication, encouraging self-care during the busy legislative session.

- XII. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 7:24pm by Chair Blinder.

- XIII. Minutes respectfully submitted by: Special Assistant, Taylor Harer