

**State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights**  
**Commission Meeting**  
**November 14, 2023 – 10am**  
**Meeting held virtually via Google Meet**  
**MINUTES**

**Commissioners Present:** Stephanie Suerth, MPA, CCEP, Chair; Diane E. Bernier; Angela Scott, Esq; Isabella Shycoff; Jeff Rosen; Gina McKnight Smith, Magdalena S. Navarro

**Management Present:** Alvin O. Gillard, Executive Director; Cleveland L. Horton II, Deputy Director; Glendora Hughes, General Counsel; Dia Drake Sprague, Director of Education and Outreach

**Staff Present:** Gerald T. Ford, Executive Associate; Alesha Bell, Unit Supervisor

**Members of the Public:** Hakeem Kirk and Jemel Howard, Outreach and Engagement Coordinators for Baltimore City Office of Equity and Civil Rights

**Meeting called to order at 10:05 a.m.**

**Chairperson's Report**

The Chair wanted to take time and see how people are doing emotionally, especially in this time of the Israel/Hamas War. Maryland is seeing many individuals triggered by these events and wanted to be sure the Commissioners are OK.

The Chair also pointed out that MCCR must be mindful of how the war impacts civil rights and MCCR needs to focus on responding in a way that supports our community.

**Executive Director's Report**

The Executive Director reviewed the 2022 Bias Report. The Executive Director highlighted that the number of reported hate bias incidents in 2022 was 465, which is the highest number of reported incidents in the last ten years. The Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center Director has expressed that this number will be surpassed in 2023. The Executive Director stated that it is important that MCCR continues to be engaged and identify ways to move the needle in a positive direction.

MCCR continues to work with our counterparts throughout the state, along with the Attorney General's office jointly convening a hate bias forum to talk about the reporting process and educate members of law enforcement and community leaders about the process of reporting hate bias, how to respond to acts of hate bias, and also how to prevent acts of hate bias. The next hate bias forum dates are January 30-31 in Baltimore City/Baltimore County.

The Executive Director had an opportunity to briefly talk with the new Superintendent of the Maryland State Police, Superintendent Butler, and he has pledged to work cooperatively with the Commission around issues of not only hate bias but also equity as it relates to the hiring, recruitment, and retention of personnel within the Maryland State Police.

Last month, MCCR received notification from HUD that they have funding available again this year for agencies to apply for partnership grants. The maximum award amount is approximately \$42,000. MCCR submitted a proposal to address issues involving appraisal equity and to conduct a more targeted marketing approach for Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore around fair housing issues. MCCR is hoping to hear back from HUD sometime in December. MCCR also submitted a proposal for SEE Funds from HUD to purchase a data system. The database system chosen is going through the State procurement process.

The Executive Director will submit an exit summary that will identify the agency's growth/challenge areas, budget & staffing needs, and his assessment of the "state of MCCR", as he prepares to transition out, effective February 1, 2024.

### **Deputy Director's Report**

- The Deputy Director highlighted a few points from the Case Processing Unit's written report.
- MCCR has been reaching out to partners to figure out how we can collaborate:
  - E&O has contacted Howard County, Baltimore City, and Baltimore County to discuss collaboration ideas.
  - The Deputy Director and General Counsel have communicated with the Legislative Black Caucus to aid with modifying the cannabis legislation.
  - The Deputy Director reached out to the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center and spent the day with them to understand what they do, the types of issues reported to them, and how they respond to these issues. MCCR is also working to set up a time for us to go out and present what we do to the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center.
- The Deputy Director gave special kudos to Commissioner Bernier for FIDOS' successful Bow Wow Bash on October 27<sup>th</sup>.

### **General Counsel's Report**

- The General Counsel (GC) highlighted a few points from the Unit's written report.
- GC had several meetings with Delegate Bonnie Cullison, the sponsor of the Public Accommodations Bill on the House side, and she intends to reintroduce the PA Bill this session. The Delegate is working to identify someone to sponsor the bill on the Senate side.
- GC anticipates there will be another avalanche of bills like last year where there were over 10,000 bills filed by both the Senate and the House.
- The General Counsel served as a Baltimore County Bar Association – Affirmative Action Program panelist. The panel discussed Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) v University of North Carolina and SFFA v Harvard, Supreme Court decisions.

## **Education and Outreach Report**

- On November 15<sup>th</sup> E&O will host a “Public Accommodation, Reasonable Accommodation, Disability and Law” forum.
- Also, E&O will present a conflict resolution forum before a new partner called “The Queen and You” at Bowie State University. The training will be tailored to a younger audience.
- E&O is partnering with Howard County to do an event for Martin Luther King Day in 2024. In addition, E&O is working on its event calendar for next year, specifically Women’s History Month and Black History Month events.

## **New Business**

The Chair encouraged everyone to participate in planning MCCR's Biennial Civil Rights & Fair Housing Gala Celebration.

**The meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.**