

Maryland Commission for Women

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, November 20, 2025

5:00 PM

Virtual

Commissioners Attending:

LaShaune Stitt, Chair
Patricia Lambert, First Vice Chair
Christine Lee, Second Vice Chair
PierBlake
Brenda Brown Rever
Judy Carbone
Gloria Dent
Tekisha Everette
Maggi Gaines
Linda Han
Jodi Kelber
Joyce King
Sarah Klein
Gabriela Lemus
Fiona Oliphant
Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz
Stacey Rebbert
Monica Watkins

Commissioners Absent:

Tazeen Ahmad
Michelle Siri
Nyki Robinson
Lenita Walker

Staff Attending:

Ariana Kelly, Executive Director
Brett Jordan, Program Manager
Camille Fabiy, Program & Policy Assistant

Taryn Graves, Graduate Intern
Alex Mayen Velasquez, Undergraduate Intern
Genesis Franco, Management Associate

Additional Attendees:

Sharon Blugis, Founder/Deputy Director of RJM
Juddi Emmel, Commissioner, Maryland 250
Commission
Andrea Johnson, Director of State Policy and
Strategy, Senior Counsel
Beth Morrow, Director of Public Policy for the
Maryland Family Network
Laure Ruth, MNADV, Public Policy Director

5:00 I. Call to Order.....LaShaune Stitt, Chair
The meeting was called to order at 5:04 p.m. Chair Stitt welcomed all Commissioners and guests.

- A. Land Acknowledgement
- B. Attendance for November Meeting
- C. Approval of Agenda and September Minutes

Chair LaShaune Stitt called for approval of the agenda and September Minutes. Commissioner Pat Lambert moved approval of the agenda. Commissioner Gabriela Lemus seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

5:10 II. National Women’s Law Center Presentation
Andrea Johnson, *Director of State Policy and Strategy, Senior Counsel*
Economic and Workplace Justice from a National Perspective
State Gender Policy Collective Work

She presented on federal gender justice attacks and state responses, highlighting their work in courts, policy, and culture to support women, girls, women of color, LGBTQI+ individuals, and low-income families.

Q&A from Commissioners.

5:30 III. Maryland Family Network Presentation

Beth Morrow, *Director of Public Policy for the Maryland Family Network*
Child Care Scholarship Waitlist &
Impact of the Federal Landscape on Maryland’s Child Care Policy.

Beth Morrow emphasized child care as a vital public good, discussing efforts like Maryland’s GO FCC initiative to expand family child care and remove local restrictions to increase access. She also highlighted affordability challenges, including rising costs and scholarship waitlists, and their impact on families’ stability and well-being.

Q&A from Commissioners.

5:45 V. Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence Presentation

Laure Ruth, *MNADV, Public Policy Director*
How Recent Federal Policy Changes are Impacting MNADV
2026 Legislative Agenda

Laure Ruth’s presentation focused on three bills she is supporting: the Family and Law Enforcement Protection Act (FIPA), the coerced debt bill, and Timing of Hearings between TPO and FPO, and Relief for Financial Loss. She emphasized how these bills strengthen

survivor safety, financial stability, and access to justice.

A. Q&A from Commissioners.

6:00 VI. ED ReportAriana Kelly, Executive Director

6:10 VII. Research, Policy & Legislation Committee Report.....Monica Watkins

A. VOTE: Legislative Recommendations

- Stop Silencing Survivors.....Maggi Gaines
- Family and Law Enforcement Protection Act (Gun Bill)Maggi Gaines
- Protection of Students from Sexual Exploitation in SchoolsJoyce King

Commissioner Pat Lambert moved to adopt all three bills, seconded by Commissioner Maggi Gaines. The motion passed with one abstention from Commissioner Tekisha Everette.

B. OTC Collaborative Update.....Christine Lee
Second Vice Chair Christine Lee presented updates on the OTC Collaborative and the Community College Grant Program. The next subcommittee meeting is scheduled for January 20th, and the full collaborative will meet again in early January.

C. Upcoming Policy Committee Meetings.....Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz

The Policy Committee plans to focus on women's economic security across the lifespan, including retirement security, and will hold in-person meetings with state agencies and stakeholders to explore policy topics and develop strategic recommendations.

6:30 VIII. Outreach & Awards Committee Report.....Pier Blake

A. Women's History/Hall of Fame

Submissions Received to Date & Latino OutreachGenesis Franco
Genesis reported on outreach to multiple Latino organizations and noted an upcoming meeting with Commissioner Gabriela Lemus to support further Latino engagement. Commissioners were encouraged to promote the nomination form.

Selections Committee.....Ariana Kelly, Executive Director
Ariana confirmed that Hall of Fame nominations were received and that a selection committee has been formed.

B. Local Commissions Committee Update.....Tekisha Everette
Commissioner Tekisha Everette provided a brief recap of the local commissions meeting held right after the MLAW event.

C. State and National Partnerships Update.....Pat Lambert

6:50 IX. Foundation Update.....Sarah Klein, Foundation President
Sarah Klein gave a quick update on the Foundation, stating that the fundraiser was a success.

A. Holiday Party Update.....Sharon Bugis, Foundation Treasurer
Sharon Bugis provided details for the joint holiday party with RJM in December.

7:00 X. Adjournment.....LaShaune Stitt, Chair
Chair Stitt thanked everyone for attending the meeting today. There being no further business, she adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m

Respectfully submitted:
Ariana Kelly, Executive Director
Maryland Commission for Women
11/24/25