

# Maryland Commission for Women

Meeting Minutes  
 Thursday, April 20, 2017  
 5 p.m.

Attman-Glazer Building – Room 158 ♦ 45 Calvert Street, Annapolis, Maryland

<b>Commissioners Attending:</b>		
Lee Bachu, Chair		Ummu Thomas
Wandra Ashley-Williams, Secretary		A. Diane Williams, Vice Chair
Tawanda Bailey		Tamara England Wilson
Marianne Brackney		Marylou Yam
Tammy Bresnahan		Yun Jung Yang
Deborah Cartee		
Gloria Chang		<b>Commissioners Absent:</b>
Lorna Forde		Homayara Aziz
Nicole Ingram	T/C	Doris Ligon
Velvet Johnson		Betsy Ramirez
Bonnie Nelson Luna		Anita Riley
Marion Manski		
April Nyman	T/C	<b>Staff Attending:</b>
Carole Jaar Sepe	T/C	Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director
Corinna Shen		Tammy Wise, Management Associate
<b>Special Guest Attending:</b> Samantha Blizzard, Special Assistant to the DHR Secretary		

**I. Call to Order.....Chair Lee Bachu**

**A. Call to Order:**

Chair Bachu called to order at 5 p.m. She welcomed everyone and asked them to introduce themselves to one another.

**B. Approval of Agenda**

MCW Vice Chair A. Diane Williams moved approval of the agenda for the evening's meeting. Commissioner Yam seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

**C. Approval of Minutes:**

Commissioners Bresnahan said that in Section III., Unfinished Business, Executive Director Vaughan-Prather's name should be added after her title. MCW Vice Chair A. Diane Williams moved approval of the Minutes of the February 16, 2017 meeting with this correction. Commissioner Yam seconded the motion which passed unanimously with two abstentions.

**II. Special Guest.....Samantha Blizzard**  
Special Assistant to DHR Secretary Padilla

Chair Bachu welcomed Ms. Blizzard who said that she is pleased to serve as a channel of communication between the MCW, DHR Secretary Padilla, and the Governor and that she was attending tonight’s MCW meeting to get to know the commissioners and their work better. Ms. Blizzard said she understands that the MCW is in the process of reviewing its bylaws and noted that the bylaws of all state boards and commissions must be reviewed by the Attorney General’s office before they can be finalized.

A lengthy discussion followed regarding the application of Roberts Rules of Order to the conduct of the full Commission meetings and the meetings of its committees.

Ms. Blizzard offered to ask the Attorney General’s Office about the requirements to follow Robert’s Rules of Order in Commission meetings.

After further discussion, Commissioner Yang moved that the MCW move forward with the agenda for tonight’s meeting. Commissioner Cartee seconded the motion. Commissioner Forde moved to amend the motion to postpone discussion of the Bylaws Review Committee report until after the Attorney General’s office can provide guidance on how strictly Robert’s Rules apply to MCW meetings and to the meetings of its committees. MCW Vice Chair A. Diane Williams seconded the motion to amend which passed. The motion as amended – to move on with the agenda for this evening’s meeting but tabling the discussion of the Bylaws Committee report until guidance from the Attorney General’s office is received - was then called for a vote and passed with 12 in favor, one against and five abstentions.

Chair Bachu noted that the MCW is engaged in much important work and has had outstanding accomplishments this year. It is good to be able to discuss openly and frankly any concerns we have and to continue to work together with respect and mutual friendship.

**III. Chair’s Report.....Chair Bachu**  
**A. Women’s History Month Activities**

Chair Bachu thanked all the commissioners for their very hard work during March, Women’s History Month. She congratulated the Women of Tomorrow and Hall of Fame committees for a wonderfully successful event. In addition to the MCW event, the Commission was represented at several other programs around the state during the month of March:

- Chair Bachu represented Maryland’s First Lady Yumi Hogan at the Women’s History Month program of the Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority on March 4 in Annapolis.
- Chair Bachu and Commissioner Brackney represented the MCW at the Maryland Women’s Heritage Center event unveiling the expansion of its Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame exhibit on March 5 in Baltimore.
- Chair Bachu and Executive Director Vaughan-Prather spoke at a meeting of the Korean American Women’s Society on March 12 in Rockville. Commissioners Brackney and Yang convened that event and were in attendance as well.

- Commissioners Ingram and Bailey represented the MCW at the Circle of Sisters event, sponsored by the Washington County Commission for Women on March 30 in Hagerstown. Vice Chair A. Diane Williams noted that she and Secretary Ashley-Williams, at the invitation of the Washington County CFW, helped evaluate all the nominees for its “Woman of the Year Award” presented at that event.
- Vice Chair A. Diane Williams reported that she was very honored to represent Maryland’s First Lady at the Harford County CFW’s “Women of Tomorrow” event on March 30 where 30 girls were honored and two received scholarships!

Chair Bachu spoke recently with Senator Susan Lee at the Listening Tour event in Montgomery County and offered to bring the entire MCW to speak to the Maryland legislators to brief them on the MCW activities. She said the senator was very receptive to this proposal.

**IV. Unfinished Business**

No unfinished business was brought before the MCW.

**V. New Business**

No new business was brought before the MCW.

**VI. Committee Reports**

**A. Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame.....Commissioner Brackney**

Commissioner Brackney reported that she had made a point of including all committee members in the planning and implementation process. The Hall of Fame/Women of Tomorrow Awards Ceremony was very successful. Over 220 people registered and about that many actually attended. First Lady Yumi Hogan helped present the awards which added a great deal of prestige to the honors. The feedback Commissioner Brackney received from her committee members includes recommendations to shorten the inductee biographies as they are read to the audience during the program; have fewer inductees (this year there were eight), and have commissioners stationed out in the foyer of the building to help people find the ceremony room. Commissioner Cartee thanked Commissioner Brackney for her leadership and Commissioner Brackney thanked all her committee members for their hard work.

Executive Director Vaughan-Prather noted that a new HBO movie, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, starring Oprah Winfrey, will be aired on Saturday night. Nominated by the Montgomery County Commission for Women, Henrietta Lacks was inducted into the Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame in 2014.

**B. Women of Tomorrow.....Commissioners Forde and Sepe**

Commissioner Forde echoed Commissioner Brackney’s thanks and compliments to all the committee members. Commissioner Sepe recommended scheduling a joint meeting for the Hall of Fame and the Women of Tomorrow committees to review everything that worked well this year and to discuss any changes that might make the programs even better next year.

**C. Listening Tour.....Commissioners Ingram and Yang**

Commissioner Ingram reported that two sessions of the Voices of Maryland Women Listening Tour have been held since the MCW last met:

- April 8 at the Maryland Correctional Institute for Women, where the MCIW residents spoke up very effectively listing their concerns, and
- April 18 in Montgomery County, attended by about 40 and co-hosted with the Montgomery County Commission for Women.

Three more sessions are already scheduled:

- May 4 – Frederick County – at Hood College
- May 23 – Charles County – College of Southern Maryland, La Plata Campus
- June 8 – Anne Arundel County – Anne Arundel Community College – West Campus

Every session has been very different and all are really important.

Commissioner Yang thanked Commissioner Shen for arranging a meeting with representatives of the Chinese language press (ACMedia) to promote the Listening Tour in Montgomery County for the Chinese American community. Commissioners Yang, Shen and Vice Chair A. Diane Williams attended with Executive Director Vaughan-Prather. Vice Chair Williams thanked Commissioner Shen for hosting the interview.

The Listening Tour was paused from December to April to avoid conflicting with the Hall of Fame/Women of Tomorrow project. The Listening Tour Committee plans to meet tonight after the MCW meeting to begin scheduling the remaining sessions to be held around the state, including Baltimore City and the Eastern Shore.

**D. Education and Outreach.....Commissioner Bailey**

Commissioner Bailey served as the MCW’s liaison to the planning meeting for the 2017 Women Moving Forward Conference at the Maryland Correctional Institute for Women in Jessup on April 8.

Commissioner Bailey noted that the MCW voted, via email on March 27, to support the conference with a \$100 sponsorship. She moved ratification of that vote at tonight’s meeting. Commissioner Ashley-Williams seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Commissioner Bailey reported that approximately 150 – 180 residents attended the conference to help them prepare for the transition from incarceration back into work, family and community. MCW Chair Bachu led a seminar on financial literacy, and Commissioners Ingram and Yang, with Executive Director Vaughan-Prather, conducted a session of the Listening Tour as a seminar there. The conference was a great success with much excellent information provided to the residents. Commissioner Bailey will attend a meeting of the conference steering committee to evaluate its success and lay the groundwork for next year.

Commissioner Johnson noted that she volunteered at the conference and helped with job-interview practice sessions. Finding employment is very difficult after incarceration. She encouraged any commissioner who can offer jobs or who can encourage other to make jobs available to transitioning women, to do so. She said that 33% of prisoners in Maryland come from the Baltimore region and urged the Listening Tour Committee to take that into consideration as the report of its session is written. Chair Bachu said that a frequently mentioned problem is that residents are provided only \$50 when they are released from prison. Commissioner Forde said that the Montgomery County CFW is starting a re-entry project for women leaving the county detention center. She suggested checking with other county CFWs to see if any have similar programs.

In other Education and Outreach Committee activities, Commissioners Bailey and Ingram, along with Executive Director Vaughan-Prather, attended a meeting of the Frederick County CFW, having been invited to discuss plans for the Listening Tour event to be held there next month. Commissioners Bailey and Sepe regularly attend meetings of the Frederick County CFW.

- E. Legislation and Public Policy..... Commissioner Bresnahan**  
Commissioner Bresnahan thanked her committee members, especially Secretary Ashley-Williams, for all their help with the MCW’s legislative activity during the 2017 session of the Maryland General Assembly. She reported on the final status of the bills the MCW supported this year.

**Bills the MCW supported that failed**

**HB 214 Discrimination in Employment – Conditions related to Childbirth**

**Lead Sponsor:** Delegate Morales

This bill would have made clarifications to Maryland’s existing law to ensure pregnant workers were not forced into taking leave-without-pay as an alternative to a “reasonable accommodation.” The bill also allowed for accommodations for lactation-related needs. While the bill did not get out of committee, this is one of the issues on which she expects to see progress during the 2018 legislative session.

**Recommendation:** The MCW should vote to support similar legislation before the session begins and plan to testify in person on this legislation.

**HB 428/SB 574 Rape Survivor Family Protection Act**

**Lead Sponsors:** Delegate Kathleen Dumais/Senators Brian Feldman

Current law gives rapists who cause a child to be conceived the same rights as other biological parents. Additionally, if a rapist-parent cannot be located, current law requires that the victim’s name be published in the newspaper. MCASA (the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault) continues to support legislation to limit the parental rights of rapists when the child was conceived through rape and to increase protections for rape survivors who have a child conceived through rape. This is the same standard used in other family law cases that result in the termination of parental rights. This bill failed on the last day of session when a conference committee was not appointed until it was too late to pass a bill.

**Recommendation:** The MCW should stand firm in its commitment to the enactment of this legislation with a clear and convincing standard of evidence. MCW should decide early to support this bill and to do so with in-person testimony. MCW should write to the chairmen Vallario and Zirkin expressing disappointment in this year's results.

**Bills the MCW supported that passed:**

**SB 217/ HB 429 Criminal Law - Sexual Offenses – Physical Resistance**

**Lead Sponsors:** Delegate Kathleen Dumais/Senator Delores Kelley

This bill, referred to as “No Means No”, clarifies and modernizes Maryland’s sexual assault statutes by making it clear that rape victims are not required to physically resist sexual assault. It creates a fundamental and important improvement in Maryland’s response to sexual assault survivors and is one of the most important changes to the criminal law in recent years.

**Status:** Both bills passed and were signed by Governor Hogan on April 18, 2017.

**SB 232/HB 616 Pregnant and Parenting Teens – School Attendance Policy**

**Lead Sponsors:** Senator Manno/Delegate Atterbeary

Young women who are pregnant or parenting often struggle in school due to lack of support from the school district. Students need excused absences for medical appointments or to care for their children, and they need resources to make up the schoolwork missed during that time. This bill creates an attendance policy in schools for pregnant and parenting students for their medical and legal appointments.

**Status:** Both bills passed and are, as of this date, waiting for the Governor’s signature. (Executive Director Vaughan-Prather noted that Delegate Atterbeary was once the President of the Montgomery County Commission for Women before beginning her political career.)

**SB 636 Commission on the Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Passage of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution**

**Lead Sponsor:** Senator Klausmeier

This bill expands the membership of the Commission on the Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution to include a member of the Maryland Heritage Women’s History Center.

**Status:** Passed, as of this date, waiting for the Governor’s Signature

Commissioner Bresnahan moved that the MCW take a position now in support of legislation addressing the issues in HB 214 Discrimination in Employment – Conditions Related to Childbirth and HB 428/SB 574 Rape Survivor Family Protection Act, and plan to do so with in-person testimony, and further, that the MCW should write to the chairmen Vallario and Zirkin expressing disappointment in this year’s results. Secretary Ashley-Williams seconded the motion which passed with two abstentions.

Chair Bachu thanked Commissioner Bresnahan and her committee for all their hard work over the course of the legislative session.

**F. Communications and Public Relations..... Staff for Commissioner Ramirez**

The two existing MCW Facebook pages were created by commissioners and/or interns years ago. Passwords are missing and there are other problems the current commissioners have pointed out. Commissioner Ramirez decided that a new page should be created, and worked with Management Associate Tammy Wise. The Communications and Public Relations Committee members had a chance to review the new page before tonight’s meeting. All Commissioners are urged to look at it after tonight and provide any feedback by Friday April 28. As soon as it “goes live” commissioners will be urged to “like” it, “follow it” and share it with their social media networks.

**G. Health and Wellness.....Commissioner Yam**

The committee continues to develop and send out Health Alerts on a monthly basis. A health alert on endometriosis awareness month was sent out in March and today an alert was sent on Sexual Assault Awareness and Protection Month. The committee plans to work with information gained from the Listening Tour to further develop the MCW on-line women’s health resource directory, and to guide its work.

**VII. Liaison Reports**

**A. Maryland Women’s Heritage Center.....Chair Bachu**

The MWHC has been advised that it has to vacate its current lease-free premises by the end of June, as the space is needed for tenant activities. The Notre Dame of Maryland University engaged in discussions with the MWHC board with the possibility of relocating the center to the University’s campus. However, Commissioner Yam reported that there were issues that could not be resolved, and the MWHC is looking at other options including a possible location in Baltimore City. Chair Bachu thanked Commissioner Yam for her very generous offer and her efforts to assist the MWHC in its current situation.

**B. MLAW.....Secretary Ashley-Williams**

The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women followed a number of bills, including those formally on its agenda and others that were of specific concern to women. She provided a final statute report on the following legislation:

**HB 498/SB 562 Health Care Decisions Act – Advance Directives and Surrogate Decision Making – Disqualified Individuals PASSED**

Primary House Sponsor: Delegate Shelly Hettleman

Primary Senate Sponsor: Senator Delores Kelley

This bill will prohibit certain individuals from serving as a surrogate decision maker or health care agent for the purpose of making health care decisions for a patient if they are the subject of an interim, temporary or final protective order for that patient or if the individual is the spouse of a patient with a separation agreement or who has filed for divorce. The goal is to prevent an abuser (spouse, intimate partner, family member, guardian) from making health care decisions for someone they have abused and who may even have caused the patient’s injuries.

**HB 294/SB 224 Public Safety – Regulated Firearms – Definition of Convicted of a Disqualifying Crime PASSED**

Primary House Sponsor: Delegate Kathleen Dumais

Primary Senate Sponsor: Senator Susan Lee

This bill will ensure that people who have received a Probation Before Judgment (PBJ) in a criminal court case for second degree assault for a domestically-related crime cannot retain their firearms. This change would correct an inconsistency in the current law.

This legislative proposal came out of a Family Violence Council workgroup that included a broad diversity of advocates and criminal justice stakeholders.

**HB 293/SB 274 Family Law – Divorce – Domestic Violence Order PASSED**

Primary House Sponsor: Delegate Kathleen Dumais

Primary Senate Sponsor: Senator Victor Ramirez

This bill will repeal a provision that made an order or a decision in a domestic violence proceeding inadmissible as evidence in a divorce proceeding. This would allow the admission of a protective order as evidence in a divorce case. The bill would also repeal a provision prohibiting a court from considering compliance with a domestic violence order as grounds for granting a decree of limited or absolute divorce. It would allow the court to consider such evidence.

**HB 429/SB 217 Criminal Law – Sex Offenses – Physical Resistance PASSED**

Primary House Sponsor: Delegate Kathleen Dumais

Primary Senate Sponsor: Senator Delores Kelley

This bill will establish that evidence of physical resistance by a victim is not required to prove that a sexual crime was committed.

**HB 1163/SB 976 Criminal Procedure – Conditional Release – Electronic Monitoring (Amber’s Law) PASSED**

Primary House Sponsor: Delegate Aruna Miller

Primary Senate Sponsor: Senator Susan Lee

This bill will require a court to provide an individual filing an application for a statement of charges the opportunity to request certain reasonable protections for the safety of a victim or a victim’s family. An individual may also request electronic monitoring to notify a victim if a defendant is at or near a location from which the defendant has been ordered by the court to stay away.

**HB 1/SB 230 Labor and Employment – Maryland Healthy Working Families Act PASSED**

Primary House Sponsor: Delegate Luke Clippinger

Primary Senate Sponsor: Senator Mac Middleton

This bill requires employers with 15 or more workers to permit the workers to earn a certain number of annual paid sick and safe days. The “safe time” component of the bill requires employers to allow employees who have been victims of domestic abuse or sexual assault to use their accrued paid sick leave to care for their health after these incidents or to seek legal protections or new housing.

Commissioners Bresnahan and Ashley-Williams plan to attend the legislative wrap-session sponsored by the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) on May 2 in Annapolis. They encouraged other commissioners to attend as well.



**C. 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment Commemoration Commission.....Vice Chair A. Diane Williams**  
Authorized in July 2013, the Commission to Commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of the United States created and installed an historical marker in Overlea, Maryland on June 9, 2014, commemorating the historic women’s suffrage march through Maryland in February 1913. The law creating this commission provides that the MCW has two seats. Chair Bachu and Vice Chair Williams represent the MCW on this board. Vacancies on this commission have been filled recently with appointments by the Governor. The newly passed SB 636 expanded the membership of that Commission to include representation by the MWHC.

**VIII. Staff Report.....Executive Director Vaughan-Prather**

**A. Staffing**

It was announced that Management Associate Tammy Wise will be on parental leave probably starting in late August, and likely to extend for at least eight weeks.

**B. American Councils for International Education (ACIE)...with Commissioner Yang**

In the fall, ACIE, in a program funded by the U.S. Department of State, sponsored a professional fellow, Nighina Azizov from the nation of Moldova, to work in the MCW office for four weeks. Ms. Azizov, who is the Chief of Staff for the Moldovan Deputy Speaker of Parliament, worked on the MCW Listening Tour project while she was here. She wrote an “outbound project” proposal, which was selected for funding from the State Department, to bring Commissioner Yang and Executive Director Vaughan-Prather to Moldova to assist in developing a Listening Tour project there: The Voices of Moldovan Women. They traveled to Moldova March 30 through April 5. While there, they met with representatives of government and NGO groups, including:

- Deputy Speaker of the Moldovan Parliament, Mrs. Palihovici
- Political Science faculty and students at the State University of Moldova
- La Strada, an organization advocating for victims of human trafficking, domestic and sexual violence
- Casa Marioarei, a shelter for victims of domestic violence and their children
- Staff of the U.S. Embassy and the Professional Fellows Program in Moldova
- U.N. Women in Moldova
- The International Republican Institute
- The Moldova Chapter of the International Women Democracy Network, including representatives of LeaderSHE and the Civil Society Advisory Group, at the Ministry of Agriculture
- Actress and women’s rights activist Mihaela Strambeanu
- The first session of the “Voices of Moldovan Women” listening tour, held in the village of Puhoi, assisting with the conduct of the forum.

Ms. Azizov has already been invited to bring the Listening Tour to another village, and the first session attracted a great deal of public interest. In addition, Ms. Azizov is exploring the possibility of implementing at least four other initiatives she experienced during her fellowship in offices of the Maryland Commission for Women:

- Development of an alert system similar to the Maryland Amber Alert
- Establish a “Women of Tomorrow” program
- Establish a Commission for Women, or maybe several such commissions
- Support local women-owned businesses when organizing events by using local women-owned vendors whenever possible.

**IX. Announcements:**

- A.** Commissioner Brackney announced that May is Asian American Heritage Month.
- B.** Secretary Ashley-Williams announced that the NAACP will hold its national conference in Baltimore this year, July 22 – 26. It will include the Women in the NAACP (WIN) brunch on July 23. Commissioner Forde asked that invitations to that event be sent to all of the CFWs in the state.

**X. Adjournment.....Chair Bachu**

Chair Bachu thanked everyone for attending this evening’s meeting and for all their hard work. There being no further business, she adjourned the meeting at 7:23 p.m.

***Respectfully submitted:***

Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director

Maryland Commission for Women

DATE: May 12, 2017

**APPROVED:**     May 18, 2017