

Maryland Commission on Caregiving

February 6, 2025

10:30 AM -12:00 PM

Virtual Meeting Minutes

Meeting Minutes

- Commission Member Present: Shalini Arora, Larry Bram, Mary Anne Kane Breshi, Dawnita Brown, Jennifer Eastman, Patricia J. Morris, Theresa Robertson, Chalarra A. Sessoms, Ann Squire, Trina Townsend, Esther Ward, Kathy Wehr, Molly Wisniewski
- Guests: Estelle Brooks, Pearl Harmon, Terri Johnson, Ruth Kershner, Leslie Smith-Ray, Hilary Wiseman
- Welcome & Introduction: Shalini Arora
 - Yetundee Olobatuyi left her position at the Department of Human Services on December 31, 2024. Shalini shared appreciation for all the great work Yetundee did for the Commission during her tenure.
 - Shalini expressed gratitude to Theresa Robertson and Kate Farinholt for their leadership of the Commission over the past several months. Also acknowledged, the efforts of Jennifer Eastman's leadership as the Chair and the accomplishments of the Committee under their leadership highlighting particularly the successful launch of the Caregiver Survey. Committee members and guests echoed their gratitude!
 - Shalini announced and welcomed Molly Wisniewski the Family Caregiver Program Manager at Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) will be stepping in as the Commission Chair. Molly brings over 20-years experience in the aging services most recently chairing the Housing Upgrades to Benefit Seniors Leadership committee at a Baltimore City Non-Profit.
 - New Commission Member, Dawnita Brown was introduced and welcomed to the Commission having started in December and joined the commission at the Holiday luncheon. Dawnita is a caregiver to both of her parents and is the owner and founder of two organizations dedicated to caregiving. She is pursuing a Doctorate of Public Health at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, where her research focuses on Designing Culturally Responsive Interventions, Policies, and Practices for Black Daughter Caregivers.

- Commission Members and Guests introduced themselves and their roles as it relates to caregiving and the Commission.
- Introduction of MDOA supporting the New Chair: Leslie Smith-Ray
 - Leslie echoed appreciation and gratitude for Theresa, Kate, and Jennifer for all of their support and leadership they brought to the Commission. Acknowledging that MDOA has worked closely with each of them to ensure we are working across the lifespan.
 - MDOA was awarded the ACL Caregiver Navigation Grant in Fall 2024, making Maryland one of only four states to receive this funding. We are actively working toward the grant's goals, which include collaborating with the commission to develop new caregiver support strategies, relaunching the caregiver survey, and improving data tracking. These efforts will strengthen our ability to advocate for caregivers across all age groups in Annapolis.
 - Additionally, the grant supports the efforts of the Commission Chair. MDOA currently oversees the Title III E Family Caregiver programs across the state, and our Title III E program manager will also lead the ACL grant. This alignment strengthens our commitment to the Commission, especially as we transition into the new Chair role.
- Review and approval of November's meeting
- Motion to approve November's meeting Minutes: Yes
- Update on ACL Caregiver Navigation Grant: Leslie Smith-Ray
 - MDOA is collaborating with DHS and DOD to expand the previous Caregiver Survey to include caregiving for individuals 18 years and younger.
 - Next Steps for the Commission: A subcommittee will be formed to review the results of the current survey and determine appropriate next steps based on the data. Ahead of the March meeting, Molly will send an email requesting volunteers.
 - Additionally, DHS will facilitate an introduction between MDOA and the School of Social Work to discuss incorporating caregiving for individuals under 18 into the survey expansion.
 - It was noted that the other states to receive the ACL grant are Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and California.
 - The ACL Grant's action items will support the development of new strategies for caregiver resources and training. Additionally, the grant will enhance our ability to report on current data when advocating for caregivers in Annapolis. Mary Anne noted, having

robust data strengthens advocacy efforts and raises awareness, making it easier to apply insights to policies relevant to Maryland.

- Legislative Update:
 - Leslie provided an update on SB 104: Income Tax – Credit for Individuals Residing With and Caring for Elderly Parents.
 - As a reminder, last year’s session passed SB 202, which remains an unfunded bill. SB 104 seeks to reintroduce the tax credit, but given Maryland’s economic deficit, and the fact that this bill carries a Fiscal Note, its passage may be challenging. However, 14 states have successfully passed similar caregiving tax credit bills, with many requiring multiple attempts—highlighting the importance of persistence.
 - Leslie emphasized the positive takeaway that legislators continue to push for bills supporting caregivers.
 - Larry added that budget cuts remain a major concern, noting the potential \$200 million reduction to the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). In response, a rally and hearing will be held in Annapolis.
 - Jennifer shared that SB 355 – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Delay of Implementation, originally set to take effect in July 2025, is being considered for a two-year delay due to various factors, including budgetary concerns.
 - Theresa raised the question of whether the Commission should formally oppose the delay, given that it previously submitted a Letter of Support (LOS) and Letter of Intent (LOI) for the original bill. After discussion, it was decided that while individual Commission members may choose to oppose the delay, the Commission as a whole will not take an official stance.
 - Theresa requested that the Commission receive a list of legislation before it is heard in Annapolis.
 - It was noted that Dorinda (who was not present during the meeting) has been a valuable resource for identifying and tracking legislation.
 - There is also the potential for convening a legislative subcommittee.
 - Additionally, the establishment of Points of Contact (POCs) for key Commission initiatives was discussed:
 - **Respite Programs at DHS:** For inquiries related to In-Home Aid Service (IHAS) and the Adult Respite Care Program, please contact IHAS Program Administrator, **Deb Wilburn** at deborah.wilburn2@maryland.gov.

- **Commission Membership & Engagement:** For inquiries related to Commission membership, invitations, or presenting to the Commission, please contact **Molly Wisniewski** at molly.wisniewski@maryland.gov.
- **The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 6, 2025, from 10:30am-12 pm.**