

Maryland Commission on Caregiving

August 7, 2025

10:30 AM -12:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

Agenda Google Meet joining info

[Video call link: https://meet.google.com/hev-nfhr-qci](https://meet.google.com/hev-nfhr-qci)

Or dial: (US) +1 775-442-4189 PIN: 786 637 297#

Meeting Minutes

- Commission Members Present: Julia Abate; Shari Bailey; Mary Ann Kane Breshi; Dawnita Brown; Andria Chavis; Jennifer Eastman; Patricia Morris; Theresa Robertson; Greg Sesek; Chalarra Sessoms; Kathy Wehr; Molly Wisniewski
- Guests: Dorinda Adams; Estelle Brooks; Teresa Jeter-Cutting; Desiree Hung; Terri Johnson; Meiliss Karchaer; Ruth Kershner; Leslie Smith-Ray; Brenda Williams; Hilary Wisman;
- Approval of June's Meeting Minutes
 - Motion to approve June's meeting minutes: Yes

Welcome, and Introductions

- Welcome & announcements: Commission Executive Director Greg Sesek welcomed new and returning Commissioners to the 2025–2028 term (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2028).
 - New Commissioner: Delegate Jamila Woods has joined the Commission, filling the House Delegate seat.
 - Caregivers in Legislation: Greg emphasized the importance of explicitly including caregivers in legislation, noting many do not self-identify as caregivers. Recent survey results underscore this point, with nearly half of respondents reporting they perform technical medical procedures.
- 2025-2028 Commission Roster
 - New Commissioners:
 - Julia Abate – Respite Services Provider
 - Shari Bailey – Family Caregiver
 - An'Dria Chavis – Respite Services Provider
 - Delegate Jamila Woods – House Delegate Seat
 - Returning Commissioners:

- Mary Anne Kane Breshi – Maryland Department of Health
- Dawnita Brown – Family Caregiver
- Jennifer Eastman – Department of Disabilities
- Patricia Morris – Consumer Family Caregiver
- Yetunde Olobaturyi – Department of Human Services
- Theresa Robertson – Consumer Family Caregiver
- Chalarra Sessoms – Maryland Department of Health
- Trina Townsend – Department of Human Services
- Kathy Wehr – Area Agency on Aging Representative
- Administrative Updates (Chair - Molly Wisniewski)
 - Meeting Schedule: 10 meetings per year; No meetings in January or July
 - Quorum Requirement: 9–10 Commissioners must be present to conduct official business
 - Open Meetings: All meetings are open to the public
 - Commission Membership: Individuals interested in Joining the Commission can apply through the Governor’s Appointments Office:
 - <https://md.accessgov.com/governors-office/Forms/Page/v2/profile/0>

National Family Caregiver Month Discussion

- National Family Caregiver Month – Ideas & Suggestions for the Commission:
 - Historical Support: The Commission has traditionally supported county-level caregiver celebrations by collecting and sharing a one-pager of event ideas (e.g., AAA-hosted events, videos, social media campaigns). (Hilary)
 - Historical Support: AARP Maryland sponsored the Commissions Stories Loves Music event last year for National Family Caregiver Month. (Dorinda)
- Examples:
 - Montgomery County, MD: Hosting a week of events (Nov. 17–18) including Healthy Living for Brain & Body, Mental Health Coaching for Caregivers, and Mental Health & Caregiving Issues.
 - Nonprofit Partner Event: Laila’s Gift will host a caregiving conference in Annapolis on November 19. Commissioners are invited to attend and share resources (info@lailasgift.org). (Shari)
- Partnerships & Resources:
 - AARP Maryland: Exploring a pilot project and seeking input for a needs assessment (submissions due to National AARP by August 11). AARP maintains 16–20 core volunteers who actively support caregiver events. Contact Dorinda Adams (dorindaa00@gmail.com) for collaboration. (Dorinda)
 - VA Caregiver Support Program: Available to table or present at November caregiver events. Contact Hilary Wiseman (hilary.wiseman2@va.gov). (Hilary)
 - Maryland Hall Collaborative Event: Shari Bailey offered to collaborate with her

organization, Laila's Gift, for their caregiving conference at Maryland Hall to maximize shared impact and visibility for caregivers.

- Campaigns & Messaging:
 - Focus on caregiver self-identification — estimated 760,000 caregivers in Maryland, yet many do not recognize themselves as caregivers. (Greg)
 - Personal stories shared by Commissioners highlighted the journey of identifying as a caregiver, underscoring the need for public awareness.
 - Shari shared her personal experience, noting she has been a caregiver for 10 years but only began to identify with the title in year five. As a result, she missed out on resources and support during the early intervention years.
 - Patricia shared that initially she did not know what being a “caregiver” meant—it was simply part of what she did. She also noted that now her husband has become her caregiver, highlighting the evolving roles within caregiving relationships.
 - Suggestions included leveraging Maryland State platforms (e.g., Maryland Mind Health SMS/text messaging) and creative outreach campaigns.
- Respite Needs:
 - High demand for respite calls noted. Need for updated statewide listings of providers, funding sources, and availability across the lifespan. (Julia)
 - Commissioners discussed actively seeking funds and resources to expand respite support.
 - Wisconsin has a model that collates state-led respite resources into a single document, which the Commission considers worth exploring.
 - Molly will reach out to Chalarra (MDH) and Yetunde (DHS) to coordinate similar efforts for Maryland.
- National Family Caregiver Month - Additional Actions:
 - Governor's Proclamation: To be requested for recognition of National Family Caregiver Month. Leslie will follow up with the MDOA Communications Team.
 - Caregiver Action Network (CAN): The Commission will coordinate with CAN on this year's national theme. Molly will reach out to request the theme.

Presentation: Family Caregiving - A Personal Responsibility and a Workplace Wellbeing Issue
Presented by: Taylor Burnett, HR Professional, Catholic Charities

- Taylor Burnett is an HR professional at Catholic Charities with a foundation in social work and mental health counseling. She brings a trauma-informed, empathetic lens to her work in employee engagement, leadership training, and wellness initiatives. Taylor is passionate about building inclusive, supportive workplaces where people feel valued and connected to purpose. With a blend of creativity and clinical insight, she designs experiences that uplift teams and reinforce a strong organizational culture.
 - Human Services & Caregiving Journey:
 - Taylor's Early caregiving experience: Began caregiving at age 10 for

grandmother while parents were working. By age 21, became a full-time caregiver, shaping personal resilience and career perspective.

- The Need – DEI Counsel & Workplace Support:
 - Caregiver stress impacts employees both at home and at work; 73% of employees report current caregiving responsibilities while working full- or part-time (Harvard study).
 - Open-ended questions and support focus on balancing work with caregiving responsibilities, child care services, and daily challenges.
 - Workplace strategies include accessible resources, co-creation of support systems, and fostering connection to reduce isolation.
- Caregiver Support Group:
 - Purpose: Employees can show up “exactly where they are” and feel supported. ■ Format: Monthly hybrid meetings (in-person and virtual) with rotating facilitators to share ownership.
 - Content: Guest speakers (e.g., social workers) provide practical tips.
 - Appreciation Events: Includes recognition of work, massages for caregivers, and acknowledgment of contributions.
 - Leadership Buy-In: COO and CFO regularly attend to show organizational support.
- Employee Benefits for Caregivers:
 - Access for full-time, part-time, or PRN employees to:
 - Employee Assistance Program
 - Mental Health Counseling
 - Financial and Legal Consultation
 - Webinars
 - Family Medical Leave Act support
 - Paid Parental Leave
 - Bereavement Leave
 - Employee Emergency Fund
 - Flexible work options
- Reflections from Commissioners / Discussion Participants:
 - Theresa: Caregiving builds leadership skills; managing care for others develops transferable skills.
 - Taylor: Integrate caregiving topics into leadership development; caregiving experience prepares employees for multiple opportunities.
 - Shari: “Bring Your Kid to Work Day”; there is a need for more advocacy for children of all abilities to be able to participate in these types of employer offerings. Taylor mentioned Gallagher Services and support offered to staff.
 - Hilary: Return-to-office policies often overlook caregivers.
 - Taylor: New CEO promised changes, but questions remain about

implementation and cost; many employees cannot influence decisions directly.

■ Dorinda: Previously involved in a network of organizations (Catholic Charities, BGE, Social Security Administration, etc.) addressing workplace caregiving;

unsure if it still exists.

- Dawnita: Management training for understanding caregiving responsibilities is essential; managers' support critical for employee success.
- Kathy: Sandwich caregivers (caring for multiple generations) are hard to reach; supported employees are more effective.
- Teresa: Catholic Charities is a model employer; suggested tracking retention data to measure impact of initiatives.
 - Taylor: Observed decreased turnover with new initiatives, though attribution is unclear.
- Teresa: Concern about reaching younger caregivers.
 - Dorinda / Molly: Encourage Commission to reconnect with BGE regarding family caregiver support; Molly to follow up.
 - Schools / MSDE: Youth caregivers are often unrecognized; minors doing adult-level caregiving work face unique challenges.
 - Children develop stress responses when caring for family; lack of caregiver self-identification delays access to support.
 - Estelle: Highlighted that minors often "caregiver by default," e.g., checking in on great-grandparents.

Questions/Concerns/Suggestions/Announcements

- Dorinda: Shared updates from the Caregiving in My Community Pilot project by AARP Maryland, including the upcoming listening session on Monday, August 11, from 7:00–8:30 PM. Requested sharing of the session overview or related materials.
- Julz: Noted that a satisfaction survey for respite services is conducted annually. Shared data summary: ARC holds the Montgomery County contract, and due to funding limitations, some caregivers were unable to use respite services, impacting stress reduction outcomes.
 - Dorinda: Encouraged sharing Montgomery County respite data for inclusion in the Needs Assessment.
- Theresa: Announced the launch of a new initiative, The CaregiverCEO
<https://www.thecaregiverceo.com/>.

Meeting Adjourned