



## **Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

Meeting Minutes  
March 10, 2025  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM  
Zoom Virtual Meeting

### Commissioners Present:

Lee Blinder, Chair  
M Pease, Vice Chair  
Ali K.C. Bell  
Joan Bryan  
Josie Caballero  
Kurt Doan  
Debb Dunn  
Nicole Hollywood

Stephen Martin  
Paula Neira  
Wendy Novak  
Brandon Russell  
Sarah Stern  
Joe Toolan  
Kijana West  
Ly Xīnzhèn Zhǎngsūn

### Commissioners Not Present:

Mickey Dhir  
Anthony Fox  
Tina Jones  
Asher Kennedy

### Staff Present:

Jeremy Browning, Director, Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs  
Taylor Harer, Special Assistant, Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs  
Krystal Quinlan, Assistant Attorney General

### Guests Present:

Secretary Tony Woods, Department of Veterans and Military Families  
Laurel Cratsley, Maryland State Department of Education  
Phil Lasser, Maryland State Department of Education  
Charlotte Hoffman, Policy Advisor - Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

- I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to Order by Chair Blinder at 6:03 PM. Housekeeping and Meeting Guidelines were read and acknowledged. Additionally, meeting attendees were reminded to add their pronouns to their Zoom names and instructions were provided.

- II. Roll Call: Roll call was conducted by Chair Blinder and they provided a review of the voting procedures using the Zoom reaction functions to indicate vote (green "check" to indicate "yea" and the red "X" to indicate "nay" and no action to abstain).
- III. Agenda Approval: Chair Blinder presented the agenda for the meeting and the agenda was approved by obvious agreement.
- IV. Guest Speakers:
  - Secretary Tony Woods, Department of Veterans and Military Families: Tony Woods, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families, shared his background, including his military service and coming out during the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" era. He highlighted his work with Governor Moore's administration and emphasized his role in supporting the trans community. Woods discussed efforts to aid trans service members, including resources for military discharge status and employment opportunities. He also addressed concerns over federal VA service cuts, warning of negative impacts on veterans' benefits and crisis support. Woods called for further suggestions to enhance LGBTQIA+ support, particularly for trans veterans.
  - Laurel Cratsley, Blueprint Implementation & Strategic Initiatives Coordinator, MSDE: Laurel Cratsley from MSDE discussed the department's efforts to support LGBTQIA+ students in response to federal actions, including guidance on student rights, anti-bullying, and inclusive health education. MSDE, with input from 14 staff members, is committed to maintaining inclusive curricula and addressing bullying. Future plans include releasing additional guidance, a practitioners' guide, and expanding ally training through the Trevor Project. They are also creating an online hub for resources and seeking feedback to improve support.
- V. Chair Report: Chair Blinder expressed the difficulty and distress of the current time, particularly for the trans community, as they face increasing attacks and a lack of support from expected allies. They acknowledged the challenge of supporting those who are scared and worried while also being personally affected. Despite these challenges, they remain hopeful, emphasizing the importance of community, mutual support, and the historical legacy of resilience. They emphasized finding strength in the relationships and love within the community. Chair Blinder reaffirmed their commitment to continuing their work and expresses gratitude for the support from others.
- VI. Vice Chair Report: M Pease reflected on the honor of working alongside the group, despite the challenges and pain they face. They emphasized the importance of holding multiple truths, recognizing the privilege of supporting marginalized communities while also acknowledging the hardships and struggles experienced. Vice Chair Pease highlighted the transformative power of relationships, love, and care outside of institutional systems, echoing Chair Blinder's sentiments. They encouraged creating joy and support for one another both within professional spaces and in personal relationships, expressing deep gratitude for being part of this important work.
- VII. Director Report: Director Browning announced that Commissioner Tina Jones has stepped down from the Commission. He acknowledged her contributions and offered support to others. He also provided an update on the 2024 financial disclosures and the annual report, aiming for a draft before the May meeting and released before Pride season. He also noted the resources webpage is live and continuously updated. Director Browning reminded the group of the next Commission meeting on May 12th and the strategic planning retreat on July 19th, with the Bannaker Douglas Tubman

Museum offering to host. He emphasized the importance of regularly reviewing the Commission's mandates, available on the website and in the annual reports.

- VIII. Approval - Previous Meeting Minutes: The minutes from the last meeting were presented to the Commission. There were no additions or objections from the Commission and the minutes were approved.
- IX. Discussion and Approval - 2025 Legislative Policy Priorities: Advisor Hoffman provided an update on the 2025 Legislative Session, highlighting key dates: March 17th as the Opposite Chamber Bill Crossover Date, April 7th for the adjournment "Sine Die," and May 27th as the deadline for the Governor to sign or veto bills. Hoffman then reviewed the Birth Certificate Modernization Act, noting that the bill is currently not moving forward. An explanation was provided regarding the reasons for the lack of progress on the bill at this time. Additionally, Hoffman shared information on upcoming bill hearings.
- X. Discussion - Federal Actions: Policy Committee Chair Caballero provided an overview of the statement that was drafted on the Federal Attacks on Transgender Marylanders. A motion was made to approve the statement pending edits with no substantive modifications by Commissioner Hollywood, seconded by Commissioner Bryan, and the floor was opened for discussion. Commissioner Neira expressed concerns with the motion concerning the motion, and made a motion to amend the original motion to "approve the statement pending edits with no substantive changes," which was seconded by Commissioner Caballero. The amendment was adopted via unanimous consent. with no additional commentary or nays. The vote on the amended motion was approved unanimously.
- XI. Open Forum for General Remarks or Comments: Chair Blinder invited the Commission to share any remarks or comments, including information about trans visibility events. Commissioner Bryan asked about the details of the strategic planning meeting. Director Browning confirmed it is scheduled for July 19th, from 10 AM to 4 PM, though the location is still to be finalized. Chair Blinder mentioned that the meeting would occur before the end of the summer pride season.
- XII. Closing Remarks: Chair Blinder expressed deep gratitude to everyone for their time and dedication to the community, acknowledging the significant burden that comes with doing impactful work that affects their daily lives. They reflected on the importance of community organizing, recalling successful strategies, and emphasizing the value of ongoing work. Chair Blinder expressed hope that the group would continue to take care of each other and themselves, noting that the next full Commission meeting would be in May, after the legislative session.
- XIII. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 8:00 by Chair Blinder

Minutes respectfully submitted by: Special Assistant, Taylor Harer