Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs



Photo credit: Joe Andrucyk, Office of the Governor - Carlton R. Smith Act Bill Signing, May 20, 2025

2025 Annual Report

Executive Summary

In 2025, the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs continued its work to assess challenges facing LGBTQIA+ Marylanders, elevate community voices, and advance practical solutions across State government. Amid a rapidly changing national landscape, the Commission worked with community members, State agencies, elected officials, and partner organizations to strengthen protections, respond to emerging issues, and ensure LGBTQIA+ experiences informed policy and decision-making.

A major focus of the year was the **Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment**, conducted in partnership with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. The assessment collected responses from **1,217 LGBTQIA+ adults across all 24 Maryland jurisdictions**, providing one of the most comprehensive pictures to date of the experiences, needs, and barriers facing LGBTQIA+ Marylanders. Findings identified challenges across health care, mental health, safety, housing, employment, community connection, access to resources, and interactions with State systems, with disparities particularly evident among transgender and gender-expansive respondents, rural residents, and other communities experiencing intersecting barriers.

The Commission also remained actively engaged in policy and legislative advocacy, engaging on **more than 30 bills** affecting LGBTQIA+ Marylanders across health care, education, housing, civil rights, identity documents, immigration, and public safety. Among the year's significant developments was passage of the **Carlton R. Smith Act**, which repealed Maryland's outdated HIV criminalization law. The Commission supported additional legislation to strengthen protections and access to services while opposing proposals affecting gender-affirming care, education, and other areas important to LGBTQIA+ communities.

Beyond legislative advocacy, the Commission continued working across State government to collect data, identify gaps, and advance LGBTQIA+-inclusive policies and practices. This report brings together State data on discrimination complaints, hate-bias incidents, school safety, youth well-being, and State employment. Community engagement also remained central to the Commission's work, with Commissioners and staff participating in **more than 50 events across Maryland** and numerous other opportunities to engage communities and partners.

The findings throughout this report reinforce that while Maryland has made meaningful progress, continued work is needed to ensure LGBTQIA+ Marylanders experience equitable access, safety, and well-being. Recommendations emerging from the Community Needs Assessment call for stronger State coordination, expanded access to affirming health and mental health care, investment in community-based organizations, improved navigation of rights and State systems, reduced administrative barriers, stronger hate-crime prevention and survivor support, and sustained attention to LGBTQIA+ needs in State planning and budget priorities.

STATE OF MARYLAND

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Wes Moore

Message from Governor Wes Moore

Dear Friends,

Maryland's strength has always come from our people and from our commitment to building a state where everyone is treated with dignity, respect, and has the opportunity to thrive. As we continue working to create a safer, more equitable future for all Marylanders, the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs plays an essential role in helping ensure that the voices and experiences of LGBTQIA+ communities are reflected in the work of State government.

Throughout 2025, the Commission continued to strengthen partnerships across Maryland, engage communities in every region of our State, and provide thoughtful recommendations to help advance policies that improve the lives of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders. From advising State agencies and the General Assembly to expanding community engagement and launching one of the State's most comprehensive assessments of LGBTQIA+ community needs, the Commission has demonstrated the value of listening first and leading with collaboration.

At a time when LGBTQIA+ communities continue to face significant challenges across the country, Maryland remains committed to protecting the rights, safety, and dignity of every person. We know that meaningful progress is achieved through partnership, informed decision-making, and a shared commitment to ensuring that every Marylander has the opportunity to thrive.

I am grateful to the Commissioners, community leaders, State agencies, and staff whose dedication and service make this work possible. Their leadership, expertise, and unwavering commitment continue to strengthen our State and help build a Maryland where everyone belongs.

I invite you to read this report, reflect on the progress we have made together, and join us as we continue working toward a Maryland that is more inclusive, more equitable, and more welcoming for all.

Sincerely,



Wes Moore
Governor

100 State Circle, Annapolis, Maryland 21404
(410) 974-3400
TTY Users Call via MD Relay
governor.maryland.gov

Message from the Special Secretary of Public Engagement and Community Initiatives and Senior Advisor to the Governor

Dear Friends,

It is an honor to support the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs as part of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives. GOCI's mission is rooted in building meaningful connections between Maryland's communities and their government, and the Commission plays an essential role in ensuring that the voices, experiences, and priorities of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders are represented in that work.

Throughout 2025, the Commission continued to demonstrate what is possible when government and community work together. Commissioners and staff engaged communities across the State, strengthened partnerships with State agencies and community organizations, informed important policy discussions, and worked to identify and address emerging challenges facing LGBTQIA+ Marylanders.

The Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment, conducted in partnership with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, represents an especially significant milestone. Its findings provide State leaders, community organizations, advocates, and partners with valuable insight into where Maryland is making progress and where barriers remain. Equally important, the assessment helps ensure that future decisions are informed by the experiences of the people and communities they are intended to serve.

The Commission's accomplishments are made possible by individuals who generously contribute their time, expertise, lived experience, and commitment to public service. I want to recognize Lee Blinder for their leadership as Chair throughout 2025, as well as each of the Commissioners who served during the year. I am also grateful to Director Jeremy Browning and Special Assistant Taylor Harer for their leadership and dedication, and to the many State and community partners whose collaboration strengthens this important work.

The accomplishments reflected in this report represent meaningful progress, but they also remind us that our responsibility does not end with the adoption of inclusive policies. Those policies must be reflected in the everyday experiences of Marylanders; in their ability to access services, protections, opportunities, resources, and support.

As we look ahead, GOCI remains committed to working alongside the Commission and communities across Maryland to continue turning that commitment into meaningful action and to help build a State where every Marylander is seen, heard, respected, and able to thrive.

Sincerely,



Maria Martinez (she/her)
Special Secretary of Public Engagement and Community Initiatives
Senior Advisor to the Governor

Message from the Chair of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

Dear Community,

It is an immense privilege to serve as your Chair of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs. I take on this role thinking of the LGBTQIA+ people who have existed across all of human history who, in the face of repression and violence, had the courage to envision pathways of joy and love and authenticity. As leaders in our community, we have the tremendous honor and responsibility to steward that legacy and create a better future for our communities.

Our State has continued to strengthen protections for LGBTQIA+ people and affirm that queer and trans Marylanders belong here. These commitments help make Maryland a place where LGBTQIA+ people choose to make their home, where they live and love, build their families, pursue careers, and invest their time and talents into strengthening our communities.

I am extremely proud of the Commission's first LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment, conducted in partnership with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. The findings show that, despite progress, too many community members still face barriers to affirming health care, mental health support, safety, housing stability, and access to resources simply for who they are and who they love. Therefore, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to our community and creative in our pursuit of empowering resources, policies, and practices across the State.

As we consider what those findings ask of us, I think especially of the Black trans communities, Indigenous trans and Two Spirit communities, trans communities of color, queer and trans youth, and those whose experiences are shaped by intersecting systems of oppression. Their resistance, resilience, authenticity, and joy remind us that we must center those most marginalized in our efforts to leave no Marylander behind.

I am deeply grateful to Lee Blinder for their leadership as Chair throughout 2025 and for helping guide the Commission through an important chapter of growth. I also want to express my profound appreciation to my fellow Commissioners, Director Jeremy Browning, Special Assistant Taylor Harer, and the advocates, organizations, State partners, and community members whose presence and advocacy continue to shape our work.

I look forward to working alongside all of you in the ongoing project of collective empowerment for our communities and toward a future where LGBTQIA+ Marylanders are represented, protected, valued, and able to thrive.

In service and solidarity,



M Pease (they/them)
Chair, Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

Message from the Director of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

Dear Marylanders,

Each year, the Annual Report gives us an opportunity to look back at what we have accomplished and reflect on what we have learned. Despite the challenges of the last year, Maryland has continued to make progress toward LGBTQIA+ inclusion.

According to the Movement Advancement Project, Maryland's overall LGBTQIA+ policy score increased from 72 percent in January 2023 to 90 percent as of September 2026. During that time, protections related to sexual orientation increased from 67 to 90 percent, while gender identity policy scores rose from 77 to 88 percent. These gains reflect the leadership of the Moore-Miller Administration, the General Assembly and LGBTQ+ Legislative Caucus, community advocates, and the Commission's continued work to assess needs, recommend solutions, and track progress.

However, progress on paper does not always tell us what people are experiencing in their everyday lives. The Commission's first LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment heard from 1,217 LGBTQIA+ adults from every jurisdiction in Maryland about their experiences, needs, and the barriers they continue to face. The findings give us a clearer picture of where Maryland's progress is making a difference and where gaps remain between policy and people's lived experiences.

Throughout 2025, the Commission engaged on more than 30 bills, worked with State agencies and community partners, responded to emerging challenges, and participated in more than 45 events across Maryland. Among the year's most significant milestones was the passage of the Carlton R. Smith Act, which repealed Maryland's outdated HIV criminalization law after years of advocacy by community partners.

I am deeply grateful to our Commissioners, staff, partners, advocates, and the many LGBTQIA+ Marylanders who have shaped this work. I am especially grateful to Lee Blinder for their leadership as Chair and for their partnership throughout the year. We have made significant progress, but this report also makes clear how much work remains. I am proud of what we have built together and deeply committed to ensuring that progress continues.

With Gratitude,



Jeremy Browning (he/him)
Director, Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

Section 1

About the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

About the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

Brief History:

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs was created by the 2021 General Assembly by House Bill 130, sponsored by Delegate Lily Qi. Following the passage of House Bill 130, the 15 member commission was appointed by the Governor and held their first public meeting in January 2022. Once the commissioners were seated, they appointed Director Jeremy Browning (he/him) with approval of the Governor in July 2022. In 2023, the General Assembly altered House Bill 130 with House Bill 141 to expand the Commission from 15 to21 members and added “IA+” to the name.

Mission:

To serve LGBTQIA+ Marylanders by galvanizing community voices, researching and addressing challenges, and advocating for policies to advance equity and inclusion.

Vision:

A Maryland where all LGBTQIA+ people are able to live full and authentic lives.

Values:

- **Equity and Justice:** Advocating for equity, systemic change, and centering our most vulnerable community members.
- **Inclusion and Belonging:** Creating affirming environments where historically excluded voices are uplifted, celebrated, and valued.
- **Integrity and Accountability:** Acting transparently, ethically, and responsibly for the communities we serve.
- **Empowerment and Support:** Providing resources, education, and support for individual and community growth.
- **Compassion and Empathy:** Approaching work with intentionality and care to foster understanding and healing.
- **Collaboration and Community Focus:** Working together across diverse communities to create systemic and collective change.
- **Joy and Liberation:** Making space for celebration and love, promoting environments where individuals thrive authentically and freely.
- **Proactive and Innovative Progress:** Continue to be a space of action, moving forward with new ideas and solutions.

Our Role: Assessing Challenges and Advancing Solutions for LGBTQIA+ Marylanders

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs was established by the General Assembly to share the experiences, needs, and priorities of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders in State government. The Commission works to assess challenges facing LGBTQIA+ communities, elevate community voices, and advance practical solutions that promote equity, inclusion, safety, and well-being across Maryland.

The Commission carries out this work in partnership with the Governor's Office, State agencies, the Maryland General Assembly and its LGBTQIA+ Caucus, local governments, community organizations, advocates, and LGBTQIA+ Marylanders across the State. These partnerships help connect lived experience and community expertise with policymaking, program development, and implementation.

Through research, public engagement, policy recommendations, testimony, and collaboration, the Commission helps identify emerging needs, highlight gaps in systems and services, and support actions that improve the lives of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders. The Commission's work is guided by its statutory mandate and by the voices of the communities it serves.

Legislative Mandates:

- ➢ Assess the challenges facing LGBTQIA+ communities
- ➢ Collect data across State agencies on:
  - Implementation of LGBTQIA+-inclusive policies
  - Complaints alleging discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity
- ➢ Study and establish best practices for inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals and communities
- ➢ Inform the Executive and Legislative branches of State government of issues concerning LGBTQIA+ persons
- ➢ Offer testimony on issues concerning LGBTQIA+ persons before legislative and administrative bodies
- ➢ Act as a clearinghouse for activities to avoid duplication of efforts
- ➢ Create surveys and appoint advisory committees
- ➢ Publish an Annual Report and any other material the Commission considers necessary, that includes recommendations on policies for LGBTQIA+ adults and youth that work to end discriminatory practices in the State
- ➢ Seek money from the Federal Government, foundations, and private sources for any of its purposes

Find more information about the Commission at https://goci.maryland.gov/lgbtq/.

Commission Meetings

In 2025, the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs held regular meetings virtually on Zoom. Commission meetings are subject to the Maryland Open Meetings Act and members of the public are invited and encouraged to attend.

2025 Commission Meetings

- January 13, 2025
- February 10, 2025
- March 10, 2025
- April 7, 2025
- May 12, 2025
- July 19, 2025 - In Person Strategic Planning Retreat
- September 8, 2025
- November 10, 2025

View upcoming meetings, agendas and meeting minutes by visiting: https://goci.maryland.gov/lgbtq/meetings/

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs strives to make its meetings as accessible as possible. If you need accommodations or assistance, please contact the Commission at LGBTQIA@maryland.gov at least one week prior to the meeting.

Commission Committees

Committees meet at the discretion of the committee chairs. Standing committees and advisory committees are also subject to the Maryland Open Meetings Act. View upcoming meetings, agendas and meeting minutes by visiting: https://governor.maryland.gov/lgbtqia/meetings

Standing Committees

- Policy
- Development

Advisory Committees

- Youth & Education
- Health & Wellness

Special Committees*

- Ad-hoc Strategic Planning
- Community Needs Assessment

**Special committees include ad-hoc committees and workgroups which are not subject to the Maryland Open Meetings Act.*

Members of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

The 21-member Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs reflects the age, gender, gender identity or expression, ancestry, national origin, color, disability, religion, sex, sexual orientation, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, veteran status, and geographic diversity of the State of Maryland. Members are required to understand the issues facing LGBTQIA+ communities and advocate for solutions to the challenges affecting those communities.

Commissioners are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Maryland Senate. Appointments are made with the goal of ensuring broad representation of Maryland's diverse LGBTQIA+ communities and geographic regions. Marylanders interested in serving on the Commission or another State board or commission can learn more and apply through the Governor's Office of Appointments.

Commissioners and Officers as of September 2026

Chair: M Valle Pease, M.S. (they/them)
Montgomery County



M Valle Pease is a doctoral candidate in counseling psychology at the University of Maryland, College Park and doctoral intern clinician at Towson University Counseling Center. Their research program, clinical work, and advocacy experience broadly center around race, gender, and sexuality, exploring how intersectional systems and experiences of oppression harm communities. They also work to elevate experiences of creativity, healing, and joy for marginalized communities. They have worked with organizations including the American Psychological Association, Trans Maryland, Trans Lifeline, and the Williams Institute at University of California, Los Angeles School of Law. They center love and connection in their approach to leadership, supporting the creation of a world where LGBTQIA+ Marylanders are not only accepted, but cherished and able to thrive in their fullness.

Vice Chair: Tica Torres-Bolivar (he/him/él)
Baltimore City



Tica is a Cuban American TransMan, community healer, and public affairs professional rooted in Baltimore City. Born and raised in Miami, FL, he brings over 16 years of clinical and administrative health care experience, grounded in a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a master's in health care administration. A 2023 National Hispanic Latino Behavioral Health Association Executive Leadership Fellow and 2026 New Leaders Council Fellow, Tica works at the intersection of healing, policy, and community power. He currently serves as Policy and Government Affairs Advisor at Planned Parenthood of Maryland and as Chair of the Baltimore City LGBTQ Commission. Drawing on lived experience as a Latino trans person, Tica leads with

authenticity, compassion, and a deep commitment to culturally grounded health access, systems change, community healing, and collective liberation.

Deborah Dunn (she/her), PAC, MBA
Prince George's County



Deborah Dunn, PAC, MBA, is a distinguished family practice Physician Assistant and excited to join the Resolve MD: Direct Primary Care private practice in January 2025. Graduating from Howard University in 1983 and holding an MBA from Johns Hopkins University, Dunn provides leadership in transgender care, establishing best practices, training medical providers, and advocating at the State level. She played a pivotal role in creating Gender: Joy (Journey of Youth), a program for trans/gender-diverse youth. Recognized as Physician Assistant of the Year in 2018 and 2021, and a Health Care Hero in 2018, she serves on various boards, including the Maryland Board of Physicians, Physician Assistant Advisory, and the American Academy of Physician Assistants DEI commission.

Anthony E. Fox (he/him), MS, PhD(c), LGPC
Prince George's County



Anthony Fox, MS, PhD(c), LGPC, is the Division Chief at the DC Department of Health. He oversees the Capacity Building, Housing, and Community Partnerships Division within the HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD, and TB Administration. He is a proud resident of Prince George's County and brings 28 years of Public Health and Health Care experience to the Commission, with a focus on HIV Prevention and Care for 20 years. Previously, he served as Deputy Director for Chronic Disease at the Mississippi State Department of Health and as a Lead Trainer/Capacity Building Assistance Manager for the Mississippi Prevention Training Center and Jackson State University. Anthony is affiliated with several professional organizations and has received numerous awards for his dedication to communities. Passionate about empowering African American and LGBTQIA+ communities, Anthony volunteers extensively and advocates for mental health alongside physical well-being. In his leisure, he enjoys travel, swimming, and movies.

Dr. Nicole A. Hollywood (she/her)
Wicomico County



Dr. Hollywood is the Interim Director of Assessment in the Office of the Provost at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore where her areas of expertise are media uses and effects, student learning outcomes assessment, DEI, information literacy, culturally responsive practices, student success, and technological innovation. She received doctorate and master's degrees from Columbia University and earned a post-doctorate from Tulane University. She has authored over 40 peer-reviewed journal articles, as well as three books and several book chapters, and currently serves as Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Doctoral Studies. In her free time, she provides her public relations and marketing skills pro bono to several nonprofits and advocacy organizations focused on social justice and reducing violence.

Chloe Jay Kastner (she/her)
Harford County



Chloe Kastner, MSW, has graduate-level training in social work and community organizing, with work centered on LGBTQIA+ advocacy, trans rights, disability justice, and neurodivergent-affirming practice. A recent graduate of the University of Maryland School of Social Work with dual concentrations in Macro and Clinical Social Work, Chloe brings a practice lens shaped by both systems-level advocacy and direct support. She has experience in nonprofit leadership, community organizing, legislative advocacy, intergroup dialogue, and restorative practices. Chloe has served in multiple leadership roles with the Upper Chesapeake Bay Pride Foundation, including treasurer, secretary, and co-chair of the social committee, supporting community-building events, visibility efforts, and programming for LGBTQIA+ people and families across Harford County. Across her work, Chloe focuses on building stronger, more connected communities and advancing systems that better support LGBTQIA+ Marylanders.

Asher Kennedy (he/him)
Washington County



Asher is a trans masculine representative from Washington County, Maryland. Born in LaPlata and raised in Hagerstown, he works towards equity and true affirmation of all Marylanders. He has served on the Board of Hagerstown Hopes since 2018, currently serving as Vice President and chair of the Trans Committee. Between his professional work as a Title I Liaison with Washington County Public Schools, his work with Hagerstown Hopes, and this esteemed panel of leaders from around the State, his dedication is to ensure a better tomorrow for our youth and our State as a whole.

Courtney E. Mariette (she/her)
Prince George's County



Courtney E. Mariette is an impact agent whose work is rooted in resilience and community. Courtney serves as a Senior Liaison for Strategic Initiatives within the Prince George's County (PGC), Office of Homeland Security. She formerly served as the Deputy Director of the PGC Office of Community Relations where she implemented programing specific to improving conditions for marginalized communities. Courtney served as Co-Chair to PGC's first LGBTQIA+ Task Force and facilitated PGC's first intergenerational conversation (Brunch Out Loud) to highlight LGBTQIA+ experiences. During her tenure she's received commendations from countless Federal, State, and local agencies. Courtney proudly serves as an U.S. Air Force, Honorary Commander with Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling. Beyond service, she draws from humble New York beginnings and a lifelong commitment to family, faith, and community.

Dr. Stephen Martin (he/him), M.D.
Baltimore City



Stephen, originally from Northern Virginia, obtained his undergraduate degree from the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, VA. Afterward, he worked with Habitat for Humanity in Louisiana, coordinating home construction for hurricane victims. Subsequently, he moved to Washington, D.C., and earned his medical degree from the Howard University College of Medicine. Completing his residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital, Stephen joined Johns Hopkins Community Physicians (JHCP) as an obstetrician, gynecologist, and assistant professor. Within JHCP, he has been instrumental in developing programs for gender-affirming care in the field of obstetrics and gynecology. His clinical expertise extends to gender-affirming surgical care, with notable contributions in surgical technique, preventative screening, and trauma-informed care for gender-diverse patients. Stephen has received recognition for his outstanding contributions, including the Johns Hopkins Medicine Pride Month Achievers Award in 2021.

Paula M. Neira (she/her), JD, RN, FAAN
Prince George's County



Paula graduated with distinction from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1985. After leaving the Navy, she became a registered nurse, specializing in emergency nursing. She was the founding Clinical Program Director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Transgender and Gender Expansive Health. She currently works in the Johns Hopkins Health System Office of Integrated Healthcare Delivery. A member of the Maryland bar since 2001, Paula helped lead efforts to repeal the Don't Ask, Don't Tell law and change military regulations to allow for transgender military service. In 2020, she

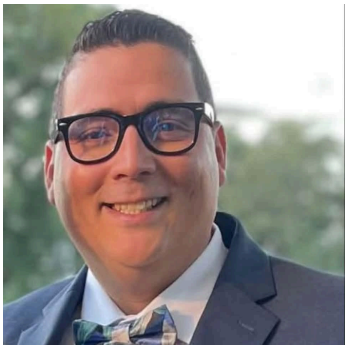
was inducted as a Fellow into the American Academy of Nursing in recognition of her leadership in advancing diversity and inclusion both in the United States Armed Forces and in healthcare. She is the first United States Service Academy graduate to achieve this honor in American nursing.

Wendy Novak (she/her)
Carroll County



Wendy is a devoted parent of three and serves as a research administrator at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. With a background in Psychology from UMBC and an MS in Accounting Information Systems from UMGC, she recently completed a Master of Science in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Leadership at UMB. In addition to her role at the university, she is an active Girl Scout Leader and a dedicated church volunteer. Wendy's advocacy work centers around promoting inclusion in local schools. Her efforts include presenting written and verbal testimonies at Board of Education meetings and to the State legislature. Wendy is passionate about creating safe and inclusive environments for all students and is committed to fostering a sense of belonging within schools.

Angel Luis Perez (he/him)
Caroline County



Angel Perez is a community leader and nonprofit professional based in Denton, Maryland, with nearly two decades of experience strengthening communities, building partnerships, and creating opportunities for connection and belonging.
Angel is the Founder and CEO of Caroline Pride, an LGBTQIA+ organization dedicated to creating inclusive community spaces, celebrating diversity, and advancing equity, inclusion, and belonging. Through Caroline Pride, he has brought together LGBTQIA+ residents, allies, nonprofits, businesses, and community leaders through events, programs, advocacy, and community engagement. His broader community service spans youth, education, behavioral health, community development, legal access, and civic engagement. Angel was named Caroline County Citizen of the Year in 2020 and received the Caliber Award-Mary Beth Brennaman Award and Jefferson Award for Public Service in 2022. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of Shore Legal Access.

Brandon Russell (he/him)
St. Mary's County



Brandon is a community organizer, advocate, and lifelong resident of St. Mary's County. He holds a bachelor's degree in English, and has 15 years experience in operations management and analytics. Brandon previously served on the St. Mary's County Democratic Central Committee, and the Maryland Democratic Party's Rural County Committee and LGBTQ+ Diversity Leadership Council. He was an At-Large Member of the Policy Committee for the Moore/Miller Administration's transition team. Brandon is currently the 2nd Vice President of the St. Mary's County Democratic Club, and Vice-Chair of Pride Southern Maryland, a volunteer non-profit that hosts an annual LGBTQIA+ pride celebration. In 2022, Brandon was one of the first openly gay candidates to run for St. Mary's County Commissioner. Today, he continues advocating for rural communities.

Calvin Greyson Ryan (he/him)
Frederick County



Calvin Ryan LCSW-C is a proud bisexual transgender man with a passion for supporting, advocating, and uplifting LGBTQIA+ communities. Calvin obtained his bachelor's degree in sociology from St. Mary's College of Maryland where he also served as the LGBTQIA+ Programs Assistant. Calvin then went on to obtain his masters degree in social work from Rutgers University where he developed an interest in providing informed, compassionate, and affirming psychotherapy to LGBTQIA+ individuals. Calvin currently works at the Maryland Center for Gender & Intimacy as a psychotherapist and primarily serves clients with diverse sexual, gender, and relationship identities. He is committed to creating and uplifting spaces that promote social justice and empower individuals to embrace their full, authentic selves.

Jeffrey Zane Slavin (zi/zim/zis)
Montgomery County



Jeffrey Z. Slavin (ze/zim/zis) served as Mayor of the Town of Somerset, Maryland, from 2008 to 2026. A longtime advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights, civil rights, and community engagement, he previously served on the Montgomery County and District of Columbia Human Rights Commissions and on the board of the National LGBTQ Task Force. He has held numerous leadership positions in philanthropy, nonprofit organizations, and local government, including serving on the Maryland Municipal League Board of Directors. In 2021, he was inducted into the Montgomery County Human Rights Hall of Fame in recognition of his advocacy

for LGBTQIA+ and women's rights. He has also received multiple awards for philanthropy and community service. Slavin holds a bachelor's degree from Tufts University and a Juris Doctor from Georgetown University Law Center.

Sarah Stern (she/they)
Baltimore City



Sarah is a proud Two Spirit Citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and lives on the unceded lands of the Piscataway and Susquehannock Nations (Baltimore, Maryland). Sarah obtained their honors Bachelor of Arts degree in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and a concentration in Native American Studies from Columbia University in 2016. Sarah works in public health writing to support community-based health programming and sustainable initiatives led by Indigenous cultural strengths for both the Johns Hopkins Center for Indigenous Health as well as Native American LifeLines. Sarah co-led the planning council of the inaugural Eastern Two Spirit Gathering in 2023 and in their free time enjoys cooking and connecting with nature.

Anissa Truitt (she/they)
Charles County



Anissa Truitt is an IT Director, entrepreneur, and community advocate with more than 20 years of experience in technology and over 15 years in IT leadership. Their career spans federal government, public-sector operations, national political and convention environments, and large enterprise organizations. Anissa is also the founder of 17th & Granville, a Maryland-based gender-neutral apparel and lifestyle brand centered on positivity, inclusivity, and community. Through entrepreneurship, partnerships, and advocacy, they work to increase visibility, opportunity, and support for Black and Brown and LGBTQ+ communities across Maryland. Anissa brings their experience in technology leadership, organizational strategy, business, and community engagement to their service on the Maryland LGBTQIA+ Commission.

Phillip Westry (he/him)
Baltimore City



Phillip Westry is the Executive Director of FreeState Justice, Maryland's statewide LGBTQIA+ legal advocacy organization, where he leads statewide service expansion, policy strategy, and institutional partnerships that strengthen legal and health outcomes for LGBTQIA+ communities. He has guided major growth in regional service delivery, launched innovative legal access and navigation models, and advanced systems-level reforms supporting people living with HIV. A public interest attorney with experience in housing, consumer protection, and community development, Phillip approaches advocacy with a focus on evidence, accountability, and measurable impact. He serves on national coalitions addressing HIV policy, economic justice, and community resilience, bringing a results-oriented, data-driven perspective to coalition leadership. Phillip is committed to building durable statewide infrastructure that advances equity and produces lasting, tangible change for Maryland's LGBTQIA+ communities.

Ly Xīnzhèn Zhǎngsūn, J.D. (they/them)
(Lydia X. Z. Brown)
Baltimore County



Ly Xīnzhèn Zhǎngsūn, J.D. (Lydia X. Z. Brown) is an internationally recognized advocate, organizer, attorney, strategist, scholar, and writer whose work addresses interpersonal and State violence targeting disabled people at intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, faith, language, and nation. Ly Xīnzhèn is Assistant Teaching Professor of Disability Studies at Georgetown University, as well as Law and Public Policy Discipline Coordinator for the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Program. Ly Xīnzhèn is Director of Public Policy at National Disability Institute and Founding Executive Director of The Autistic People of Color Fund. They serve as board treasurer of the Disability Rights Bar Association and Disability Justice Committee representative to the National Lawyers Guild board. Ly Xīnzhèn has also served as advisor to the Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network, Nonbinary & Intersex Recognition Project, and Transgender Law Center.

2025 Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs Strategic Planning Retreat



July 19, 2025 - Banneker-Douglass-Tubman Museum, Annapolis, Anne Arundel County

Honoring the Contributions of Former Commissioners

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs extends heartfelt gratitude to **2025 Chair Lee Blinder (they/them), Rev. Ali K.C. Bell (he/him), Joan Bryan (she/her), 2025 Policy Chair Josie Caballero (she/her), 2025 Health & Wellness Chair Mickey Dhir (he/him), Kurt Doan (he/him), Joe Toolan (he/him),** for their outstanding service the Commission. Each brought valuable experience, insight, and advocacy that strengthened the Commission's work and advanced equity for LGBTQIA+ Marylanders.

Their collective contributions helped drive meaningful change, foster vital partnerships, and ensure that the voices and experiences of LGBTQIA+ communities were reflected in the Commission's work. Although their service on the Commission has concluded, their contributions continue to shape our work and inspire our ongoing efforts to build a more inclusive and equitable Maryland.

Staff of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs is supported by a small but dedicated team working to advance the Commission's mission and carry out its legislative mandate. Staff support the Commission's day-to-day operations, policy and research activities, community engagement, and coordination with State agencies, elected officials, and community partners.

Jeremy Browning (he/him)
Director, Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs



Jeremy Browning was appointed Director of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs in 2022 following his selection by the Commission and approval by the Governor. He oversees the Commission's day-to-day operations, helps guide its strategic direction, and represents the Commission in policy discussions across State government. He also serves as a liaison among the Commission, the Governor's Office, the Maryland General Assembly, and community partners. Prior to this role, Jeremy founded Annapolis Pride Inc. and has spent much of his career advancing LGBTQIA+ inclusion and equity across the public and nonprofit sectors.

Taylor Harer (they/them)
Special Assistant, Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs



Taylor Harer joined the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs as Special Assistant in July of 2024, bringing a strong commitment to LGBTQIA+ advocacy, community organizing, and inclusion. Their professional experiences as a Community Organizer and EMT, as well as studies in sociology and criminal justice, has shaped their understanding of individual and community needs, the systems that shape people's experiences, and an understanding of the importance of equitable and accessible public systems. Taylor is passionate about building inclusive communities and advancing safety, dignity, visibility, and equal opportunities for LGBTQIA+ Marylanders. Through their work with the Commission, they have supported projects in community engagement and advocacy, ensuring LGBTQIA+ voices are represented in policy and public service.

Section 2

Challenges Facing LGBTQIA+ Communities in Maryland

Challenges Facing LGBTQIA+ Communities in Maryland

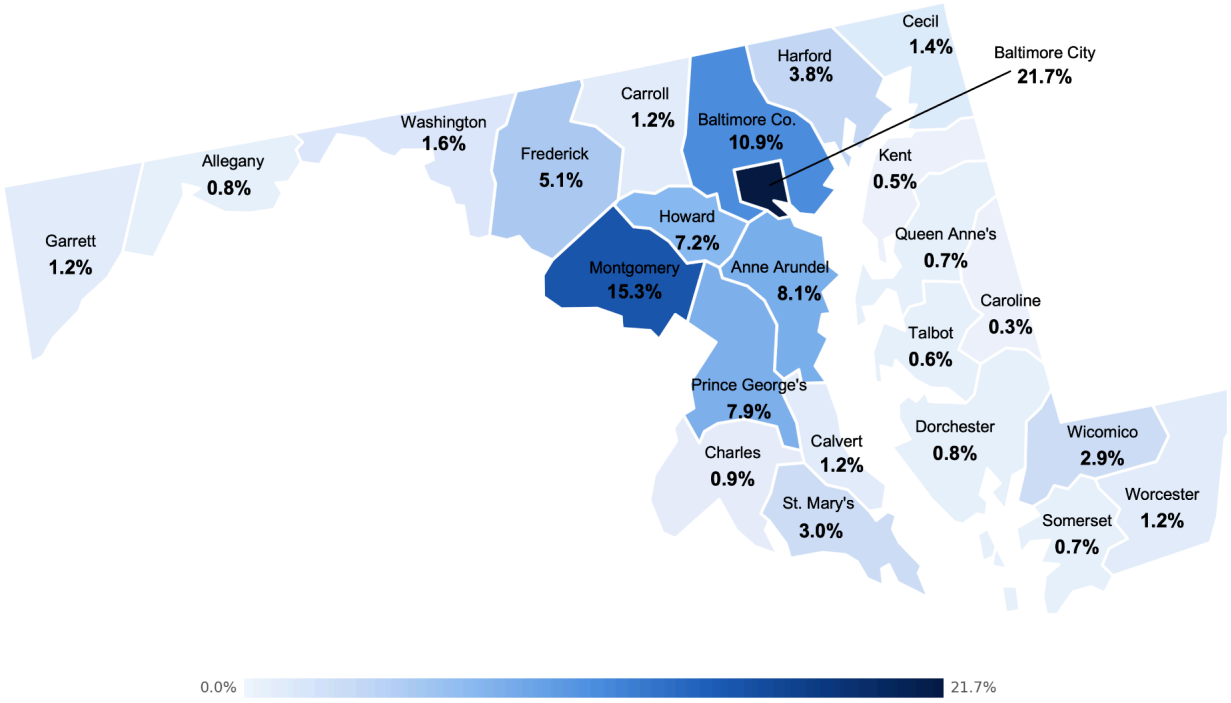
The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs is charged with assessing the challenges facing LGBTQIA+ communities across the State. In previous annual reports, the Commission drew upon national, State, and local research to document disparities affecting LGBTQIA+ Marylanders in areas including health care, housing, employment, education, safety, and discrimination. Readers are encouraged to review the challenges reported in previous annual reports here:

- 2022 Annual Report
- 2023 Annual Report
- 2024 Annual Report

Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment

In 2025, the Commission took a major step forward in fulfilling this mandate by conducting the Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment in partnership with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. The statewide assessment collected **responses from 1,217 LGBTQIA+ adults** across all 24 jurisdictions in Maryland and provides one of the most comprehensive pictures to date of the experiences, needs, and barriers facing LGBTQIA+ Marylanders.

Geographic Distribution and County Representation



Source: Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment: Comprehensive Findings Report (2026), p. 16.

The findings demonstrate an important reality: while Maryland has made meaningful progress in adopting LGBTQIA+-inclusive laws and policies, legal protections alone do not guarantee equitable access, safety, or well-being. Respondents reported persistent barriers across health care, mental health, safety, employment, housing, community resources, and interactions with State systems. These challenges are often interconnected and are experienced disproportionately by some communities, including transgender and gender-expansive Marylanders, rural residents, people of color, people with disabilities, and those with multiple marginalized identities.

This section summarizes and represents highlights from the Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment Detailed Findings Report. Readers are encouraged to review the complete report for additional data, intersectional analysis, community voices, methodology, and recommendations.

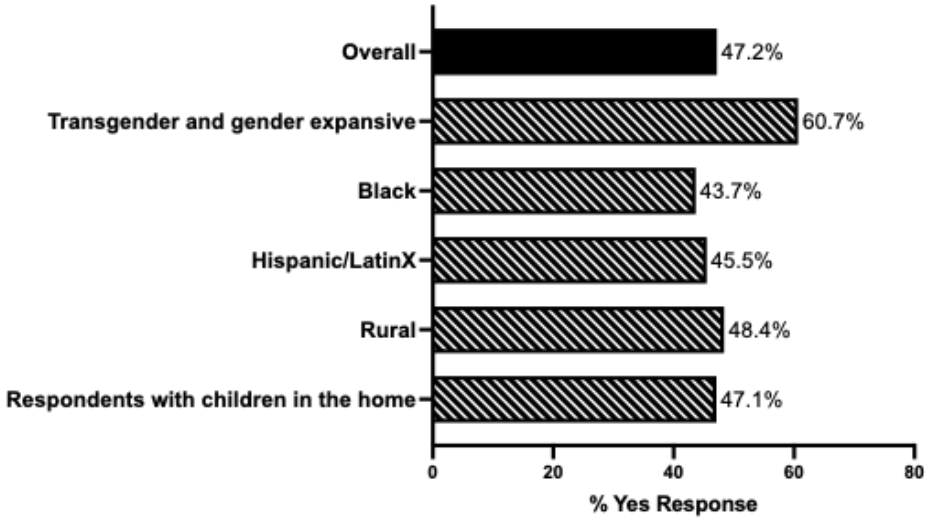
Access to Affirming Health Care

Health care access emerged as one of the clearest areas of concern. Nearly half of respondents reported avoiding medical care at least some of the time because they expected discrimination in medical settings. This concern was especially pronounced among transgender and gender-expansive respondents, but elevated levels of avoidance were also reported by Black and Hispanic/LatinX respondents.

49.3%

Of respondents reported avoiding medical care at least some of the time because the expected discrimination

Have you faced an obstacle or delay in receiving health care?



Source: Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment: Comprehensive Findings Report (2026), pp. 38, 51.

The detailed findings also report that **47.2%** of respondents experienced an obstacle or delay in receiving health care, rising to **60.7%** among transgender and gender-expansive respondents. Specialty care, mental health care, gender-affirming care, and primary care were among the services respondents most often reported being unable to access.

Mental and Emotional Health

Content Note and Support Resources:
This section includes findings related to mental health, including suicidal ideation. These topics may be difficult to read. If you or someone you know needs support, the following resources are available:

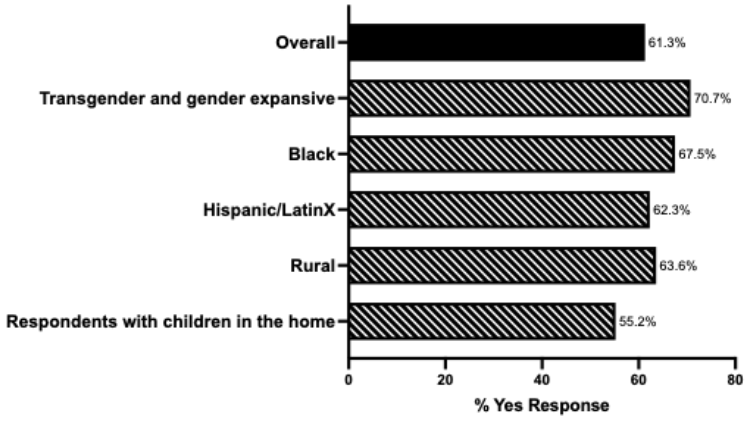
- Veterans Crisis Line (988 + Press 1 or text 838255)
- The Trevor Project (866-488-7386 | text 678678)
- Trans Lifeline (877-565-8860)
- SAGE Lifeline (877-360-5428)
- GLBT National Hotline (888-843-4564)

Mental and emotional health findings point to substantial unmet needs. While most respondents rated their current mental or emotional health as good, very good, or excellent, more than one-third rated it fair or poor. Lifetime suicidal ideation was widespread across the sample and particularly elevated among transgender and gender-expansive respondents and Black respondents.

61.3%

Of respondents reported having seriously considered suicide at some point in their lifetime

At any time in your life, have you seriously thought about trying to kill yourself?



Source: Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment: Comprehensive Findings Report (2026), pp. 40–41, 52–53.

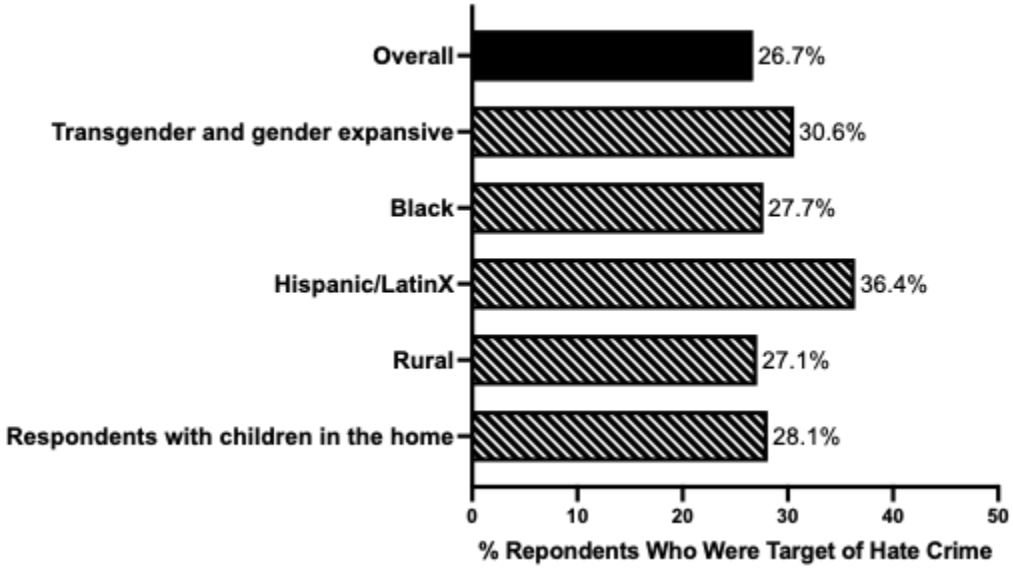
Safety, Discrimination, and Hate-Motivated Harm

Overall, most (79.2%) respondents reported feeling somewhat or very safe as LGBTQIA+ people in the State. At the same time, more than one in four reported having been the target of a hate-motivated incident while living in Maryland. Experiences were not evenly distributed across communities.

26.7%

Of respondents reported being the target of a hate crime in Maryland

Have you been the target of a hate crime?



Source: Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment: Comprehensive Findings Report (2026), pp. 42–43, 54–55.

Hispanic/LatinX respondents reported the lowest levels of perceived safety and the highest rate of hate-motivated incidents. Transgender and gender-expansive respondents also reported elevated rates of hate-motivated harm.

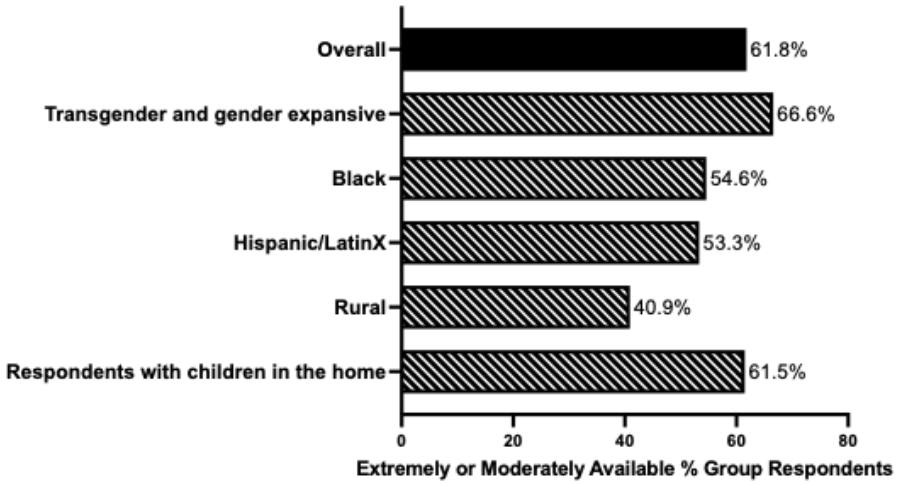
Unequal Access to Community and Resources

Access to LGBTQIA+ community resources varies considerably across Maryland. Overall, most (61.8%) respondents reported at least moderate availability of LGBTQIA+ resources, but rural respondents reported substantially lower (40.9%) access. The assessment also found that rural respondents felt less connected to LGBTQIA+ community and rated their local communities as less inclusive.

40.9%

Of rural respondents said LGBTQIA+ resources were extremely or moderately available, compared to 61.8% overall

How available are LGBTQIA+ resources to you?



Source: Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment: Comprehensive Findings Report (2026), pp. 21–22, 47–49.

On a 100-point community inclusiveness scale, the overall mean was 63.9, while rural respondents reported a mean of 43.4, one of the clearest geographic disparities in the assessment.

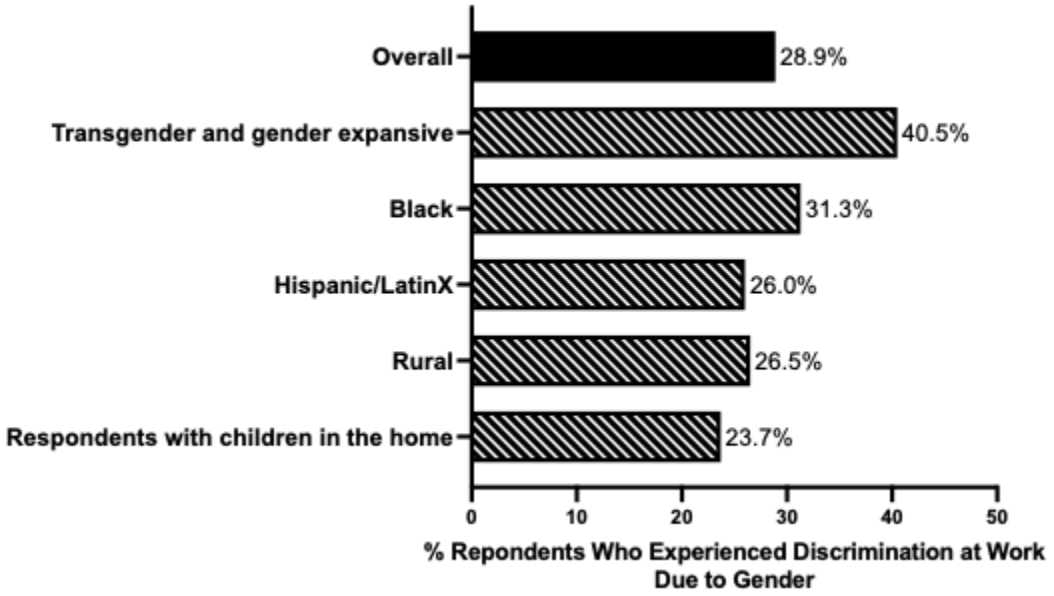
Employment and Economic Security

Workplace discrimination remains a significant concern. Respondents reported discrimination based on both gender and sexual orientation, with especially pronounced gender-based disparities among transgender and gender-expansive respondents.

40.5%

Of transgender and gender-expansive respondents reported workplace discrimination based on gender

Have you experienced discrimination at work due to gender?



Source: Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment: Comprehensive Findings Report (2026), pp. 56–57.

Overall, 28.9% of respondents reported workplace discrimination based on gender and 21.5% reported discrimination based on sexual orientation. Black respondents also reported higher-than-average (31.3%) gender-based workplace discrimination.

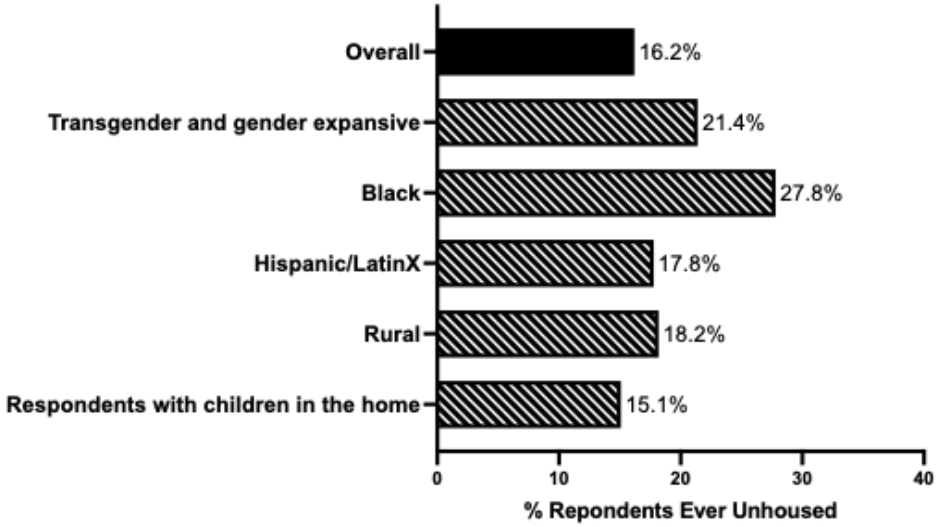
Housing Stability and Homelessness

Most respondents were currently housed, but lifetime experiences of housing instability were substantial. The assessment found pronounced disparities by race and gender identity, suggesting that housing challenges intersect with broader experiences of discrimination, economic insecurity, and access to support.

27.8%

Of Black respondents reported experiencing homelessness at some point in their lives, compared to 16.2% overall

Have you ever experienced homelessness?



Source: Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment: Comprehensive Findings Report (2026), pp. 31, 58–59.

Black respondents reported the highest rate of lifetime homelessness at 27.8%, followed by transgender and gender-expansive respondents at 21.4%. Rural and Hispanic/LatinX respondents also reported rates above the overall sample at 18.2% and 17.8% respectively.

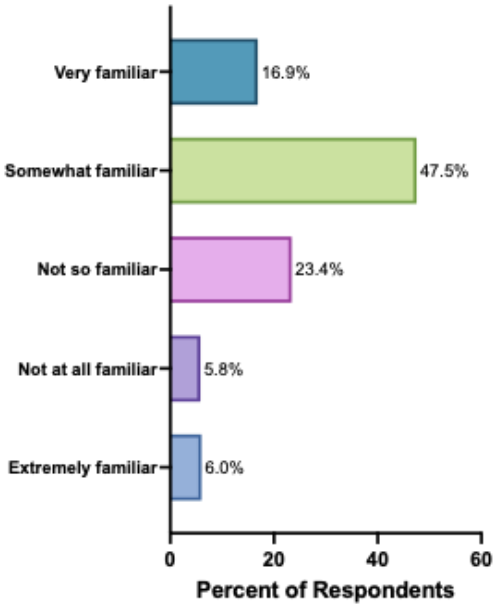
Understanding Rights and Navigating State Systems

Maryland has enacted significant protections for LGBTQIA+ people, but the assessment identified a major gap between the existence of those protections and community awareness of them. Relatively few respondents reported a high level of familiarity with State LGBTQIA+ policies and protections, while overwhelming numbers wanted more information.

91.2%

Of respondents said they wanted to learn more about policies and legal protections affecting LGBTQIA+ Marylanders

How familiar are you with the state policies and legal protections for LGBTQIA+ Marylanders?



Source: Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment: Comprehensive Findings Report (2026), pp. 24, 44–46.

Only 22.9% of respondents described themselves as very or extremely familiar with State LGBTQIA+ policies and legal protections. The assessment also identified administrative barriers related to identity documents. Among respondents who sought to change the sex or gender on a Maryland birth certificate, 54.3% described the process as at least somewhat difficult.

What the Findings Tell Us

The Community Needs Assessment shows that LGBTQIA+ Marylanders reported challenges across multiple areas, including health care, mental health, safety, housing, employment, community connection, access to resources, and interactions with State systems. The findings also show that experiences varied across different groups and regions of Maryland.

Transgender and gender-expansive respondents reported elevated barriers across several measures, including health care access, discrimination, mental health, and workplace experiences. Rural respondents reported lower levels of community connection, resource availability, and perceived community inclusiveness. Black and Hispanic/LatinX respondents also reported disparities across multiple measures.

The findings provide a detailed, community-informed picture of the experiences reported by survey participants and identify areas for continued attention, research, and policy consideration. Because the assessment used a community-based, non-probability sample, the results are not intended to represent all LGBTQIA+ Marylanders or estimate statewide prevalence. The full Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment Detailed Findings Report provides additional findings, intersectional analysis, methodology, respondent perspectives, and recommendations.

Section 3

2025 Legislative Advocacy

2025 Legislative Advocacy

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs is charged with informing the Executive and Legislative branches of State government on issues concerning LGBTQIA+ Marylanders and offering testimony before legislative and administrative bodies. In 2025, the Commission carried out this mandate through legislative testimony, policy advocacy, engagement with State agencies and elected officials, and formal responses to emerging State and federal policy issues.

2025 Legislative Session

During the 2025 legislative session, the Commission engaged on more than 30 bills addressing issues including health care, education, housing, civil rights, identity documents, immigration, public safety, and other matters affecting LGBTQIA+ Marylanders. The Commission supported legislation intended to strengthen protections and access to services while opposing proposals it determined could negatively affect LGBTQIA+ communities.

Commission-supported bills were successfully enacted or advanced, including:

✔ Carlton R. Smith Act (HB 39/SB 356)

Maryland became the fifth state to repeal its outdated HIV criminalization law, with the passage of the Carlton R. Smith Act (HB 39/SB 356), a major step forward for evidence-based public health policy and dignity for people living with HIV. Named in honor of the late Carlton R. Smith, a beloved advocate and community leader who dedicated his life to advancing LGBTQIA+ rights and ending HIV stigma. The bills were signed into law by Governor Moore on May 20, 2025 and stands as a testament to his enduring legacy.



Photo credit: Joe Andrucyk, Office of the Governor - Carlton R. Smith Act Bill Signing, May 20, 2025 (Report Cover Photo)

✔ **HB 161 – Primary and Secondary Education – Comprehensive Health Education Framework – Established:** The Commission supported legislation establishing a statewide comprehensive health education framework. The legislation passed with amendments that included an opt-out provision for content related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

✔ **HB 718 – Maryland Health Insurance Coverage Protection Commission – Established:** The Commission supported legislation establishing the Maryland Health Insurance Coverage Protection Commission.

Commission-supported priorities that did not advance:

❌ HB 1368/SB 314 – Birth Certificate Modernization Act

❌ HB 1239 – Fair Housing and Housing Discrimination – Regulations, Intent, and Discriminatory Effect

❌ HJ 4/SJ 3 – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – The American Dream

❌ HB 1452 – Hate Crimes and Hate Bias – Definitions of Sexual Orientation and Hate Bias Incident

❌ HB 1055 – Commission on Nondiscrimination – Establishment

❌ HJ 5/SJ 5 – Elementary and Secondary Education – Curriculum – Importance of Diversity

❌ HB 647/SB 702 – Correctional Services – Restrictive Housing

❌ SB 916 – Education – Curriculum Standards – Requirements (Educate to Stop the Hate Act)

❌ HB 1059 – Maryland Helping Everyone Afford Life-Saving Treatments and Health Care (HEALTH) Fund and Income Tax Checkoff

❌ HB 875 – Commission on History, Culture & Civics in Education

❌ HB 93/SB 234 – Housing and Community Development – Homeless Shelter Certification Program – Establishment

❌ HB 474/SB 129 – Public Health – Maryland Commission on Health Equity – Advisory Committee and Hospital Reporting

❌ HB 556/SB 370 – Drug Paraphernalia for Administration – Decriminalization

Anti-LGBTQIA+ Legislation

The Commission opposed a number of proposals during the 2025 legislative session that would have negatively affected LGBTQIA+ Marylanders in areas including gender-affirming care, education, parental rights, and public accommodations. None of the following bills became law during the 2025 legislative session:

❌ HB 1399 – Health Occupations – Cross-Sex Hormone Therapy for Minors – Prohibition (Protect the Kids Act)

❌ HB 1385/SB 948 – Children – Parental Rights – Educational Rights

❌ HB 1019 – Human Relations – Protection of the Free Exercise of Religion

❌ HB 1188 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement – Cooperation

❌ HB 156/SB 588 – Education – Interscholastic and Intramural Junior Varsity and Varsity Teams – Designation Based on Sex (Fairness in Girls' Sports Act)

❌ HB 1395 – County Boards of Education – Volunteer Aides – School Chaplain

❌ HB 1186/SB 933 – Criminal Law – Causing Ingestion of an Abortion-Inducing Drug – Prohibition (Women's Freedom From Coercion Act)

❌ HB 282 – Public Schools – Sexually Explicit Materials – Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers

Section 4

Recommendations for LGBTQIA+ Inclusion

Recommendations and Best Practices for LGBTQIA+ Inclusion

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs is charged with studying and establishing recommendations and best practices for LGBTQIA+ inclusion and publishing recommendations on policies affecting LGBTQIA+ adults and youth. In 2025, the Commission conducted the Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment in partnership with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore to better understand the experiences, needs, and priorities of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders.

The assessment collected responses from more than 1,200 LGBTQIA+ Marylanders and examined experiences related to health care, mental health, safety, housing, employment, community connection, legal systems, and access to State protections. The findings informed a set of recommendations intended to guide future policy, programming, resource allocation, and implementation efforts.

Recommendations Emerging from the 2025 Community Needs Assessment

1. **Establish Dedicated State Infrastructure to Support LGBTQIA+ Marylanders:** Strengthen Maryland's capacity to coordinate and implement LGBTQIA+-inclusive policies and practices across State government, including consideration of an **Office of LGBTQIA+ Affairs** to support implementation, education, outreach, and interagency collaboration.
2. **Expand Access to Affirming Health and Mental Health Care:** Continue investing in affirming primary care, mental health care, specialty care, and gender-affirming care, with particular attention to underserved and rural communities.
3. **Invest in Community-Based LGBTQIA+ Organizations and Services:** Increase support for LGBTQIA+-serving organizations and reduce barriers to funding and partnership opportunities, particularly for smaller organizations and those serving rural communities.
4. **Improve Education and Navigation of Rights, Protections, and State Systems:** Expand access to plain-language information, navigation tools, and coordinated education efforts so LGBTQIA+ Marylanders can better understand their rights, available protections, and services.
5. **Reduce Barriers Related to Identity Documents and Legal Processes:** Continue efforts to simplify and modernize legal name changes, gender marker changes, and other identity-document processes; reduce administrative and financial barriers; and ensure systems are inclusive of transgender, nonbinary, and intersex Marylanders.
6. **Strengthen Hate Crime Prevention, Reporting, and Survivor Support:** Strengthen prevention efforts, improve reporting systems, expand accessible survivor support, and

increase collaboration among government agencies, community organizations, and service providers.

7. **Ensure LGBTQIA+ Needs Are Reflected in State Planning and Budget Priorities:** Integrate LGBTQIA+ needs into statewide planning, budgeting, and policy implementation efforts and support sustained investment in addressing challenges identified through the assessment.

Source: Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment: Comprehensive Findings Report (2026), pp. 67–69.

From Policy to Implementation

The Community Needs Assessment found that challenges reported by LGBTQIA+ Marylanders often cross multiple systems, including health care, housing, economic stability, safety, access to resources, and interactions with State systems. The findings also reinforce the importance of implementation, coordination, infrastructure, sustained investment, and continued community-informed data collection.

These recommendations provide a framework for the Commission's continued work with the Governor's Office, General Assembly, State agencies, local governments, community organizations, and LGBTQIA+ Marylanders to translate policy commitments into meaningful outcomes.

Section 5

State Agency Data on LGBTQIA+ Inclusion and Discrimination Complaints

State Data on LGBTQIA+ Inclusion and Discrimination

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs is charged with collecting and reviewing State data related to the implementation of LGBTQIA+-inclusive policies and complaints alleging discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. This section highlights recent data from Maryland State agencies that provide insight into discrimination, hate-bias incidents, school safety, youth well-being, and the State workforce.

The data summarized below come from different reporting systems, populations, and time periods and should not be combined or interpreted as measuring the same outcomes. Where possible, the Commission presents the terminology and measures used by the reporting agency.

Maryland Commission on Civil Rights 2025 Annual Report

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) investigates complaints of unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, health services, commercial leasing, and other areas protected under Maryland law, including discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The 2025 MCCR Annual Report included the following inquiries:

- **Employment:** 11 based on sexual orientation and 5 based on gender identity.
- **Housing:** 12 based on sexual orientation and 5 based on gender identity.
- **Public accommodations:** 4 based on sexual orientation and 3 based on gender identity.

These figures represent inquiries, not necessarily findings of discrimination, and individual inquiries may involve more than one protected basis

Source: Maryland Commission on Civil Rights, 2025 Annual Report (2026), pp. 21–25.

Annual Statewide Equal Employment Opportunity Report FY 2025

The Maryland Department of Budget and Management publishes the Annual Statewide Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) report prepared by the Office of the Statewide EEO Coordinator (OSEEOC). OSEEOC is charged with administering and enforcing the State's EEO Program in accordance with the State's equal employment and non-discrimination laws.

The State of Maryland is an equal opportunity employer and prohibits discrimination in any personnel action concerning any employee or job applicant for employment based on age; ancestry; color; creed; genetic information; gender identity and expression; marital status; mental or physical disability; national origin; race; religious affiliation, belief, or opinion; sex; or sexual orientation.

The **Annual Statewide EEO FY 2025 Report** report includes **560 internal EEO complaints filed in FY2025**. While the published report does not provide a breakdown of complaints by basis, the OSEEOC provide the Commission with the additional following data upon request:

- **Total Internal EEO Complaints:** 560
- **Complaints by Basis:**
  - **Gender Identity:** 21
  - **Sexual Orientation:** 22

State of Maryland 2024 Hate Bias Report

The Maryland Department of State Police (MDSP) in partnership with the Maryland Coordination & Analysis Center, publishes the State of Maryland Hate Bias Report annually. The report includes data from law enforcement agencies within the State of Maryland and the Office of the State Fire Marshal on actions/comments seemingly directed against an individual or group because of race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, disability, national origin, or homelessness.

Findings from the 2024 Hate Bias Report related to sexual orientation and gender identity:

- **Anti-Gay (Male):** 56 total reports, 24 verified
- **Anti-LGBT (Mixed Group):** 47 total reports, 26 verified
- **Anti-Transgender:** 18 total reports, 9 verified
- **Anti-Lesbian:** 11 total reports, 7 verified
- **Anti-Bisexual:** 1 total report, 1 verified
- **Anti-Gender Non-Conforming:** 1 total report, 1 verified

Those roll up to the broader categories of **116 sexual-orientation bias motivations** and **19 gender-identity bias motivations** in 2024. The report cautions that a single incident can have more than one bias motivation, so these are not counts of unique incidents.

Source: Maryland Department of State Police and Maryland Coordination & Analysis Center, State of Maryland 2024 Hate Bias Report (2025), pp. 7–8.

2024-2025 Maryland Public School Bullying Report

The Maryland State Department of Education's 2026 Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation in Maryland Public Schools Report provides statewide data on reported bullying during the 2024-2025 school year. MSDE reported **9,195 incidents of bullying, harassment, or intimidation**, a **3.05% decrease** from 9,485 incidents in 2023-2024.

The report also provides data on incidents related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. In **Figure 3, Descriptions of Reported Incidents**, individuals completing the bullying reporting form selected descriptions that characterized the alleged bullying behavior. The 2024–2025 data show:

- **5.1%** of reported incidents were described as related to the student's **sexual orientation**, up from **4.7%** in 2023-2024.
- **2.8%** were described as related to the student's **gender expression**, up from **2.4%** in 2023-2024.
- **2.9%** were described as related to the student's **gender identity**, up from **2.7%** in 2023-2024.

In **Figure 7, Alleged Offender's Motives**, school administrators reported possible motives identified during investigations. These findings represent possible motives identified during the investigation process and should not be interpreted as the percentage of targeted students who identify as LGBTQIA+. In 2024–2025:

- **2.5%** of reported incidents identified **perceived sexual orientation** as a possible motive, compared with **2.3%** in 2023-2024.
- **1.2%** identified **gender expression**, compared with **1.1%** in 2023-2024.
- **1.3%** identified **gender identity**, compared with **1.4%** in 2023-2024.

Source: Maryland State Department of Education, Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation in Maryland Public Schools, 2024–2025 (2026), pp. 8, 12.

2024 Youth Risk Behavior Survey/Youth Tobacco Survey (YRBS/YTS)

The 2024 Maryland High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey provides statewide data on student health and safety by sexual identity. The published analysis compares heterosexual students, gay, lesbian, or bisexual students, and students who identified their sexual identity as another identity or questioning.

Several statistically significant differences were reported:

- **Mental health:** 44.1% of gay, lesbian, or bisexual students reported that their mental health was most of the time or always not good during the previous 30 days, compared with 19.0% of heterosexual students.

- **Suicidal ideation and attempts:** 33.9% of gay, lesbian, or bisexual students seriously considered attempting suicide during the previous 12 months, compared with 9.7% of heterosexual students. Suicide attempts were reported by 19.0% of gay, lesbian, or bisexual students and 5.5% of heterosexual students.

- **Bullying:** 24.3% of gay, lesbian, or bisexual students reported being bullied on school property, compared with 14.0% of heterosexual students.

- **School safety:** 18.3% of gay, lesbian, or bisexual students reported missing school because they felt unsafe at school or on the way to or from school, compared with 11.5% of heterosexual students.

- **Unmet mental health care needs:** 29.4% of gay, lesbian, or bisexual students reported needing counseling or therapy but not receiving it, compared with 11.7% of heterosexual students.

Source: Maryland Department of Health, 2024 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results: Maryland High School Survey, Risk Behaviors and Sexual Identity Report (2026), pp. 4–5, 32–33, 38–39.

Section 6

2025 Events & Outreach

2025 Events & Outreach

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs commissioners and staff participated in over 50 events to celebrate our progress, advocate for inclusive policies, and engage LGBTQIA+ and allied communities throughout the State. Additionally, commissioners and staff attended numerous meetings, conferences, and forums to assess and share community needs, and acknowledge LGBTQIA+ days of significance.

The Commission has the privilege and honor of recognizing outstanding work from advocates and organizations with proclamations and citations on behalf of the Governor. Community members and organizations can request a proclamation or citation at least 30 days before the date needed.

Events and Outreach Highlights

January 15, 2025 - Town Hall: The Future of LGBTQ+ Protections in Maryland - *Easton, Talbot County*

January 17, 2025 - Pathway to Progress hosted by FreeState Justice - *Baltimore City*



Photo: Panelists discuss HIV Criminalization and those impacted by HIV.

January 27, 2025 - Annapolis Pride Legislative Reception - *Annapolis, Anne Arundel County*



Photo: Left to right: Commissioners & Former Commissioners: Joe Toolan (he/him), Lee Blinder (they/them), Debb Dunn (she/her), Paula Neira (she/her), Tina Jones (she/her), Director Jeremy Browning (he/him).

February 26, 2025 - Governor's Office of Community Initiatives Legislative Night - *Annapolis, Anne Arundel County*

March 3, 2025 - LGBTQ+ Legislative Caucus and Maryland LGBTQ+ Chamber Event Advocacy Night - *Annapolis, Anne Arundel County*

Photo: Advocates and allies rally in front of the State House.



March 27, 2025 - LGBTQIA+ Commission Meeting with Governor Wes Moore at Government House, *Annapolis, Anne Arundel County*



Photo Courtesy: Office of the Governor - Commissioners share challenges and recommendations with Governor Wes Moore.

March 31, 2025 - Transgender Day of Visibility Celebration at Government House, Event - *Annapolis, Anne Arundel*

April 10, 2025 - Maryland Asian Business Conference, *Rockville, Montgomery County*

April 29, 2025 - Greater Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Business Expo, LGBTQ+ Pavillion, *Washington, DC*

May 3, 2025 - Responders for Pride Ignite Conference, *Columbia, Howard County*

May 3, 2025 - Prince George's County OUT LOUD Brunch, *Largo, Prince George's County*

May 13, 2025 - University of Maryland, Information Sciences iConsultancy Presentation - *College Park, Prince George's County*

May 20, 2025 - Carlton R. Smith Act Bill Signing, Governor's Reception Room - *Annapolis, Anne Arundel County*

June 1, 2025 - Charles County PrEP for Pride - Charles County, MD

June 1, 2025 - Rockville Pride - Montgomery County, MD

June 1, 2025 - Takoma Park Pride - Montgomery County, MD

June 4-6, 2025 - WorldPride 2025 Human Rights Conference - *Washington, DC*



Photo: Bob The Drag Queen and other prominent leaders participate in a panel discussion on human rights.

June 7, 2025 - Caroline County Pride Festival - Caroline County, MD

June 7, 2025 - Prince George's County Pride Walk - Prince George's County, MD

June 8, 2025 - Old Ellicott City Pride - Howard County, MD

June 11, 2025 - Cecil County Public Schools Student Member of the Board Governor's Citation Recognition, *Elkton, Cecil County*

June 12, 2025 - Flip the Script: Integrating Sexual Health Conference hosted by the Maryland Department of Health, *Linthicum Heights, Anne Arundel County*

June 13, 2025 - Maryland Safe Haven Grand Opening, *Baltimore City*

Photo: Maryland Safe Haven Executive Director Iya Dammons, Dr. Senator Mary Washington, elected officials, community leaders celebrate the building ribbon cutting.



June 14, 2025 - Delmarva Pride 2025 Street Festival - *Easton, Talbot County*

June 14, 2025 - Sykesville Pride - Carroll County, MD

June 14, 2025 - Baltimore Pride Parade - Baltimore City, MD

June 14, 2025 - Baltimore Pride Block Party - Baltimore City, MD

June 14, 2025 - Garrett County Pride - Garrett County, MD

Photo: Members of the Garrett County Pride Board pose for a festive photo in front of the stage.



June 14, 2025 - Baltimore Trans Pride - Baltimore City, MD

Photo: 2025 Chair Lee Blinder alongside Commissioners Debb Dunn and 2026 Chair M Pease present a certificate of recognition on behalf of the Commission to Alexis Blackmon, Maryland Safe Haven.



June 15, 2025 - Delmarva Pride Brunch - Talbot County, MD

June 15, 2025 - Baltimore Pride in the Park - Baltimore City, MD

July 19, 2025 - Strategic Planning Retreat - Annapolis, MD

June 21, 2025 - Hagerstown Pride - Washington County, MD

Photo: 2025 Chair Lee Blinder presents a certificate of recognition on behalf of the Commission to the Hagerstown Hopes Board, including Commissioner and Board Chair, Asher Kennedy.



June 21, 2025 - Catonsville Pride - Baltimore County, MD

June 21, 2025 - Crofton Pride - Anne Arundel County, MD

June 22, 2025 - Cecil Pride 2025: Together We Build - Cecil County, MD

June 27, 2025 - Frederick Pride Parade - Frederick County, MD

Photo: Parade participants march in Downtown Frederick holding a trans flag with "Protect Trans Kids" while crowded sidewalks of onlookers cheer.



June 28, 2025 - Frederick Pride - Frederick County, MD

June 28, 2025 - Salisbury Pride Parade and Street Festival - Salisbury, Wicomico County, MD



Photo: Salisbury Pride Parade participants march in Downtown Salisbury holding signs and rainbow themed items cheered by crowded sidewalks of onlookers.

June 29, 2025 - PFLAG Southern Maryland Pride Picnic

June 29, 2025 - Cumberland Pride - Allegany County, MD

June 29, 2025 - Pride in the Plaza - Montgomery County, MD

July 26, 2025 - Westminster Pride Day - Carroll County, MD

October 4, 2025 - Upper Chesapeake Bay Pride - Harford County, MD



Photo: 2025 Chair Lee Blinder and Commission Staff present a certificate of recognition on behalf of the Commission to Upper Chesapeake Bay Pride board members and volunteers, including former Commissioner and current UCBP Board Chair, Kurt Doan.

October 11, 2025 - Laurel Pride Day - Prince George's County

October 18, 2026 - Annapolis Pride - Anne Arundel County *Photo:*

Commissioners & staff, elected officials, and special guests pose for a photo with Annapolis Pride board members and volunteers in front of Maryland Hall.



October 23, 2026 - Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Fall Symposium on Federal Impacts, *Annapolis, Anne Arundel County*

October 26, 2025 - Howard County Pride Festival - Howard County

Photo: 2025 Chair Lee Blinder presents the Governor's Citation and certificate of recognition on behalf of the Commission alongside other community leaders and elected officials.



November 9, 2025 - Southern Maryland Pride Festival, *St. Mary's County*

November 17, 2025 - Baltimore City Hall - Raising of the Trans Flag, *Baltimore City*



Photo: Iya Dammons, Executive Director of Maryland Safe Haven delivers remarks in front of Baltimore City Hall alongside community leaders and elected officials as the Trans Pride flag is raised at Baltimore City Hall.

December 1, 2025 - 4th Annual World AIDS Day Community Celebration, *Baltimore City*



Photo: 2025 Commissioner and Health & Wellness Committee Chair Mickey Dhir (far right) participates in a panel discussion alongside other community leaders and health professionals.

December 11, 2025 - MACo Winter Conference: Federal Policy and Marginalized Communities Panel, *Cambridge, Dorchester County*



Photo: 2025 Chair Lee Blinder delivers a presentation on federal impacts on LGBTQIA+ inclusion

---

2025 Annual Report

Published: September 30, 2026

Prepared by: Director Jeremy Browning (he/him)
and Special Assistant Taylor Harer (they/them)

Contact the Commission:

LGBTQIA@maryland.gov

Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032

Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs