



## Governor's Commission on South Asian American Affairs SPS II Meeting Minutes

March 12, 2026

**Commission Attendance:** Yes No

Obaid Ahmad, Member

Dr. Bishal Bhandari, Member

Arti Bhatt, Member

Dr. Ahmad (Raza) Khan, Member

Preeti Menon, Member

Ahmed Nawaz, (**Vice Chair**)

Nivea Ohri, Member

Sushma Potluri, Member

Dr. Faisal Quader, Member

Fahim Rafiq, Member

Amarjeet Sandhu, Member

Devang Shah, Member

Aman Shergill, Member

Preet Takhar, (**Chair**)

Archana Thakker, Member

### **GOCI Staff:**

Christina Poy – Administrative Director, Governor's Commission on SAAA Affairs Commission.

Lisa Woodfolk – Administrative Assistant for the Ethnic Commissions.

### **Summary of Minutes recorded by Lisa Woodfolk**

- Call Order and Procedural Reminders at 6:07 p.m.
- Comments – Chair Preet Takhar
- Motion to pass the **Agenda**:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> – Nivia Ohri – 2<sup>nd</sup> Ahmed Nawaz
  - Votes: Yes: 9 No: 0 Abstain: 0
  - Motion passed.
- Motion to pass the **Minutes**:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> – Raza Khan - 2<sup>nd</sup> Ahmed Nawaz
  - Votes: Yes: 9 No: 0 Abstain: 0
  - Motion passed.

- Motion for the Community Committee to take the lead for commission to organize two Maryland 250 events: 1) a Digital campaign and 2) a collaborative with the other commissions.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> – Nivea Ohri      2<sup>nd</sup> Arti Bhatt
  - Votes: Yes: 11      No: 0    Abstain: 0
  - Motion passed.
- Support of HB0061 Muslim American Heritage Month
  - 1<sup>st</sup> – Devang Shah    2<sup>nd</sup> Ahmed Nawaz
  - Votes: Yes: 11      No: 0    Abstain: 0
  - Motion passed.
- Support of HB588 Missing American Indian Native Women & Girls Awareness Day
  - 1<sup>st</sup> – Preeti Menon    2<sup>nd</sup> Arti Bhatt
  - Votes: Yes: 11      No: 0    Abstain: 0
  - Motion passed.
- Motion to Adjourn
  - 1<sup>st</sup> – Raza Khan      2<sup>nd</sup> Faisal Quader
  - Votes: Yes: 9      No: 0    Abstain: 0
  - Motion passed.

### **Commission Bylaws and Meeting Procedures**

The commission discussed proposed bylaws, with Commissioner Raza Khan raising several concerns including voting procedures and meeting definitions. Commissioner Devang Shah suggested clarifications to the attendance requirements for commissioner removal. The group agreed to consider electronic voting options for specific situations outside formal commission meetings, and Raza and Devang agreed to email their questions and suggestions for the wording of the bylaws. The conversation ended with discussions about upcoming commission strategy goals for 2026 and 2027, including plans for a healthcare summit and a collaborative peace walk event with other commissions to celebrate Maryland's 250th anniversary.

### **South Asian Maryland 250 Celebration Planning**

The South Asian Commission discussed plans for Maryland 250 celebrations, focusing on three potential initiatives:

1. a peace walk event including commissioners of the other ethnic commissions.
2. a low-maintenance digital campaign highlighting South Asian community leaders and partners
3. a collaborative multicultural event in September with GOCL leading the organization while incorporating input from various commissions.
  - a. Admin. Director Christina Poy clarified that while no grant applications have been submitted yet, they are drafting a proposal for a celebration featuring cultural

performances, education stations, resource tables and ethnic cuisine, with potential collaboration from other ethnic commissions and the Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs.

Raza expressed concerns about the South Asian Commission's bandwidth and limited manpower for executing a large event, particularly given the time constraints with summer vacations and the need to plan before June 15th. Chair Preet Takhar and Christina agreed on the importance of consolidating efforts into a single event rather than holding multiple events and proposed forming a committee involving all relevant chairs to move forward with planning. The commissioners agreed that combining efforts into one large multicultural event would be more successful than separate events. As next steps, Christina will organize a meeting with commission chairs and GOCI staff to further discuss the proposal and logistics for the event.

### **Community Committee Event Planning**

The South Asian American Commission voted to approve a motion for two main events as part of Maryland 250: one digital campaign spotlighting South Asian community members, and participation in a collaborative multicultural event in September with other commissions. Commissioner Arti Bhatt will create a framework for the digital campaign and coordinate with Tanaya Jones regarding social media implementation, while the blood drive will be incorporated into a health fair or summit as part of the health committee's activities.

### **Health Committee, Education Committee, Legislative Committee and Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Planning**

The meeting focused on planning a healthcare summit (including clinical and mental health service), with Vice Chair Ahmed Nawaz and Commissioner Bishal Bhandari taking the lead on organizing the event, potentially in October. The group discussed combining efforts with other commissions and subcommittees, and Faisal offered to bring in health IT components and connections from the University of Maryland. The Education Committee reported on plans for a "chai with DC leaders" event to recognize educators, students, and staff, including proposals for medals or certificates and potentially establishing a scholarship fund. The commission also passed motions to support two bills: one regarding Muslim and Jewish American Heritage Months and another regarding missing and murdered American Indian and Alaskan Native Women and Girls Awareness Day. Finally, the group discussed plans for AAPI Heritage Month in May, deciding to host a panel discussion instead of previous performance-based events, with a tentative date of May 17th.