

# Maryland Commission for Women

Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, April 15, 2021  
5 p.m.

## Video Conference Call

### Commissioners Attending:

Yun Jung Yang, Chair  
Tawanda A. Bailey, First Vice Chair  
Carole Jaar Sepe, Second Vice Chair  
Tammy Bresnahan  
Deborah L. Cartee  
Gloria Chang  
Maureen G. Colburn  
Amanda L. Costley  
Melissa H. Curtin  
Essita Duncan  
Kristi S. Halford  
Eugenia B. Henry  
Brenda J. McChriston  
Lauren M. Lambert  
Beth Anne Langrell  
Roberta Pardo

Luanne Ruddell  
Corrina Yi-Yuan Kuo Shen  
Maxine Griffin Somerville  
Evelyne S. Steward  
Tamara E. Wilson  
Marylou N. Yam

### Commissioners Absent:

Patricia McHugh Lambert  
Bonnie N. Luna  
Ishrat N. Memon

### Staff Attending:

Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director  
Tammy Wise, Management Associate

## I. Call to Order.....Yang

### A. Call to Order

A quorum having been established; the meeting was called to order at 5:08 p.m. by MCW Chair Yang.

### B. Approval of Agenda

Chair Yang called for approval of the agenda for tonight's meeting. She added, under Unfinished Business, updates on the Commission's decision to publish a statement in support of the AAPI Community. Commissioner Curtin added a report from the MLAW under the PAL Committee report. Commissioner Cartee moved approval of the agenda as amended. Commissioner Ruddell seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

### C. Approval of Minutes of the March 18, 2021 MCW Meeting

The Chair called for any amendments to the minutes of the March MCW meeting. Executive Director Vaughan-Prather noted that there are several "typos" that need correcting, but nothing substantive. Commissioner Langrell moved approval of the minutes of the March MCW meeting with those corrections. Commissioner Henry seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

**II. Executive Committee Report..... Yang**

**A. CFW Roundtable.....Somerville**

The three MCW officers met with Commissioner Somerville on April 7 to discuss plans for the 2021 Roundtable meeting of Commissions for Women in Maryland. The agenda was set, and invitations were sent out to the county and city CFWs last Friday, with a response date of June 4. All Commissioners are invited to join in this excellent networking opportunity.

**B. College Courses at State Penitentiaries**

The Washington Post reported that Georgetown University will begin offering the opportunity to earn a bachelor’s degree to those incarcerated in Maryland prisons. The program will be located at the Patuxent Institute in Jessup, and individuals incarcerated at other prisons in the state can apply for relocation there in order to take the courses. Commissioner Pardo moved that the Commission write to the Department of Corrections asking whether those opportunities will be made available to incarcerated women as well as to male prisoners. Commissioner Somerville seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

**C. MCW Enabling Legislation**

As discussed at previous meetings, Commissioner P. Lambert had a law clerk in her office do some comparison analysis of the legislation authorizing the MCW and similar legislation in other states. The MCW officers would like to meet with Commissioners Bresnahan and P. Lambert, and any other commissioners who would like to discuss next steps. It is likely that the Commission will want to consider developing a draft of what it would like changed in its legislation, if anything, and then to meet with strategic partners who might provide insight on the best way to pursue this legislative change.

**D. June MCW Meeting**

The June meeting of the MCW is typically organized as an annual planning meeting to set the agenda and priorities for the coming program year. The Executive Committee is discussing the format and timing of that meeting and will report back at the May meeting. Commissioners were asked to hold that date on their calendars.

**III. Unfinished Business**

**A. Women and Self-Care Health Alerts.....McChriston**

Commissioner McChriston thanked the members of her team, especially Commissioner Steward, for all their hard work developing a series of four beautiful “health alerts” that are being sent out, one each week of April, during National Stress Awareness Month. The fliers will be sent to the Governor’s Office on Community Initiatives asking that they be shared with the several ethnic commissions it serves and encouraging their translation into other languages.

**B. Statement of Solidarity with the AAPI Community**

At the March MCW meeting, Commissioner Steward recommended that the Commission develop and publish a statement of support for the AAPI community in light of recent violent acts targeting Asian American, especially Asian American women. The MCW officers and staff created the statement, got nearly unanimous approval from the Commission and DHS, and posted it on its website and Facebook pages and sent it to our email distribution lists, all

within 24 hours of the MCW meeting. Chair Yang thanked the Commission for this sensitive and very meaningful show of support.

**IV. New Business**

- A. Turn Around.....Vaughan-Prather**  
Former Commissioner Amanda Rodriguez is the Executive Director of Turn Around, a non-profit organization serving victims of sexual violence and human trafficking. The organization has several openings for members of its Board of Directors. Executive Director Vaughan-Prather encouraged commissioners to let her know if they, or anyone they know would be interested in learning more about the organizations and its Board.
  
- B. Charles County Commission for Women.....Somerville**  
The CC CFW will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a Virtual Women’s Summit on the morning of April 24. Commissioner Somerville will send information about the event to the MCW staff for distribution to the Commissioners. All are welcome to attend.

**V. Committee Reports**

- A. Policy and Legislation (PAL) Committee..... Bresnahan**

**1. MCW Legislative Platform**

The last day of the 2021 Maryland General Assembly was Monday, April 12. During this session, the MCW supported six legislative initiatives (a total of 11 bills). The results for each were summarized:

**HB 359/SB 437 Maryland Longitudinal Data System - Student Data - Pregnant and Parenting Students** adds data on pregnant and parenting students to the data collected, organized, managed, disaggregated, reported on, and analyzed by the Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) Center. The bill takes effect July 1, 2021.

**Update**

Died in committee.

**HB 581/SB 486 Labor and Employment - Employment Standards During an Emergency (Maryland Essential Workers' Protection Act)** is an emergency bill that establishes numerous benefits and protections for essential workers, as defined by the bill, during an emergency, and related responsibilities for each employer of an essential worker. Among other things, the bill requires an employer to provide hazard pay and personal protective equipment (PPE) at no cost to essential workers. The bill also requires the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE) to provide a special enrollment period (SEP) during an emergency for an essential worker who is not insured under a group health benefit plan sponsored by the employer. The bill applies prospectively and may not be applied or interpreted to require the payment of hazard pay for work performed in an emergency before the bill is enacted.

**Update**

Passed, not yet signed.

**HB 147/SB 250 Criminal Law – Sexual Crimes – Repeal of Spousal Defense (Love Is No Defense to Sexual Crimes)** repeals an exemption from prosecution for specified sexual crimes if, at the time of the alleged rape or sexual offense, the person was the victim’s legal spouse.

**Update**

Failed, after amendments.

**HB 205 /SB 427 Public Schools - Provision of Menstrual Hygiene Products – Requirement** requires each local board of education to ensure that each public school provide, at no charge to the students, menstrual hygiene products via dispensers in the restrooms at the school. A public middle or high school must install menstrual hygiene product dispensers in at least two restrooms on or before October 1, 2021, and in specified restrooms on or before August 1, 2025. A public elementary school must install menstrual hygiene product dispensers in at least one restroom on or before October 1, 2021. The bill takes effect July 1, 2021.

**Update**

Passed, sent to Governor for signature.

**HB 235 Correctional Services - Pregnant Incarcerated Individuals - Substance Abuse Assessment and Treatment** requires correctional units to screen pregnant incarcerated individuals for substance use disorder (SUD) at intake using a validated screening tool, regardless of the jurisdiction of confinement or the length of time that the individual is expected to be at the correctional unit. The bill also establishes requirements for correctional units relating to the assessment, treatment, and release of pregnant incarcerated individuals with an SUD.

**Update**

Died in committee.

**HB 411/SB 43 Criminal Law - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Sexual Activity** expands the list of individuals with whom a law enforcement officer is statutorily prohibited from engaging in sexual contact, vaginal intercourse, or a sexual act, to include (1) a victim, witness, or suspect in an investigation during the course of an investigation that the law enforcement officer is conducting, supervising, or assisting with and (2) a person requesting assistance from or responding to the law enforcement officer in the course of the law enforcement officer's official duties. These additional prohibitions do not apply if the officer had a prior existing legal sexual relationship with the individual, unless an interim, temporary, or final protective order between the parties is in effect at the time of the sexual contact, vaginal intercourse, or sexual act.

**Update**

Passed, sent to Governor for signature.

Commissioner Bresnahan suggested that the MCW might want to write to the chair of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee urging in the 2022 session, the reintroduction of the bill eliminating the use of marriage as a defense against charges of sexual assault and that he use his leadership to see it pass. Commissioner Pardo so moved. The motion, seconded by Commissioner Steward, passed unanimously.

Chair Yang thanked the entire PAL Committee for all its hard work this year. Commissioner Bresnahan agreed, noting that the committee members, especially Committee Vice Chair Halford, had been very active this year, and especially helpful drafting testimony and tracking legislation.

**2. MLAW.....Curtin**  
No report except that the Board will meet in two weeks and will discuss whether the fall conference will be held in person or virtually.

**B. Achievement and Recognition (ARC) Committee..... Cartee**  
The website announcing the 2021 inductees into the Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame and the recipients of the 2021 Maryland Young Women Leaders Award “went live” on Thursday, March 25. Commissioner Cartee shared the website with the commissioners, walking them through the various sections. As of last week, it had over 670 “views,” and a second “it’s not too late” announcement was just sent out this week, encouraging anyone who hasn’t already to visit the site. A program book will be printed in hard copy and shared with the honorees. Thank you letters have been sent to all the “speakers” on the site. She thanked all the members of her committee who worked so hard this year, especially Committee Vice Chairs Pardo and L. Lambert. She also commended the staff in the DHS Graphics Office for their incredible design and collaboration. Chair Yang commended Commissioners Cartee, Pardo, Lambert and the entire committee for all their creativity, dedication and very hard work. Commissioners Pardo and L. Lambert again commended Commissioner Cartee for her leadership on this committee.

For next year, it has been suggested that the entire Commission, not only the ARC Committee, see the list all Hall of Fame nominees. Commissioner Steward commended the MCW staff for its work on this project and suggested a brainstorming meeting to discuss the process of nominations, etc., for next year.

**C. Status of Women in Maryland (SWIM) Committee..... Yam**  
*Maryland Women: A Status Report* is done! The data has been gathered, the report written and graphically designed. It was reviewed multiple times by committee members and has finally been sent to the DHS Secretary’s staff for comments and approval after which it will be published. Copies will be sent to all commissioners. Its public release will be at the June 10 CFW Roundtable Meeting, and it will be published on the MCW’s website and Facebook pages. A pre-publication briefing of the full report will be presented to the Commission at its May meeting.

This completes Phase II of the SWIM project, and the committee is now ready to start Phase 3, focusing on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the women of our state. Chair Yang asked for a motion to formally approve the implementation of Phase 3 of the SWIM project.

Commissioner Yam moved approval of the plan to study the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on women in Maryland. Commissioner Steward asked whether the project should examine the impact of the societal reckoning with ongoing racial inequities that has also impacted lives this year. Commissioner Yam said that her motion is to study the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, and the project will include a focus on the special impact on women of color. Commissioner Shen seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Commissioner Yam again thanked her committee members, especially Committee Vice Chair Steward, for all their very hard work.

**VI. Liaison Reports**

- A. The Foundation for the Maryland Commission for Women.....Shen**  
No report.
  
- B. The Maryland Women’s Heritage Center..... Yang**  
The Heritage Center hopes to hold an in-person open house at its new facility in Baltimore in the fall.
  
- C. Women Moving Forward Conference.....Bailey**  
The spring conference has been postponed, due to the pandemic, and it is hoped that it can be held sometime in the fall. When the planning committee reconvenes, Vice Chair Bailey will transfer the liaison responsibilities to Commissioners Colburn and McChriston.
  
- D. Maternal Mortality Review Stakeholders Group..... Langrell**  
No report.
  
- E. Maryland Women’s History Museum..... Luna**  
No report
  
- F. UMD SAFE Center..... Costley**  
No report.

**VII. Staff Report..... Vaughan-Prather**

**A. Issue Alerts**

- Three of the four well-being, self-care messages have been sent to our distribution lists that reach more than 1400 individuals and organizations. The fourth will be sent next week.
- An “in case you missed it” message was sent for the Hall of Fame/Maryland Young Women Leaders Award website.
- A message about Sexual Assault Awareness Month was distributed. (And the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault sent a message thanking the MCW for helping to raise awareness.)

**B. Website Redesign**

The redesign on the MCW’s website had to be put on hold while the new Hall of Fame/Maryland Young Women Leader Awards site was prepared. The staff is now working again with the web designers in the DHS Graphics Office. It is anticipated that the changes will be relatively minor, as the site must conform to DHS website protocols, but we can address some of the issues raised by commissioners to make it more user friendly and more clearly focus on the MCW’s work.

**VIII. Announcements**

**A. Next MCW Meeting Dates:**

- Executive Committee – May 13, 2021
- MCW Meeting – May 20, 2021

**IX. Adjournment..... Yang**  
Chair Yang thanked all the commissioners again for their very hard work and dedication throughout the weeks in between meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted:*

Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director  
Maryland Commission for Women

**APPROVED:**  
**May 20, 2021**