HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING
Approved Minutes April 21, 2022

Meeting occurred via WebEx Teleconferencing

Chair Scott Markow called meeting to order at 7:02p.m.

**Commissioners Present:** Scott Markow, (Chair), Bianca Chang, Kui Zhao, Gabriel Terrasa (Corresponding Secretary) Joan Hash, Jonah Hornum (Vice Chair) Bob Ford, Lynda Earle, Peter Hwang, Nina Basu

**Absent:** Sahara Ukaegbu (Student Commissioner), Yolanda Sonnier (OHRE Staff), Tiffany Releford

**Staff Present:** Juan Torres, Fatina Jackson

**Legal Counsel:** Melissa Goldmeier

I. **PUBLIC FORUM**

No one from the public forum was present, however the speaker Yvette Oquendo joined the meeting.

II. **APPROVAL OF MARCH MINUTES**

Scott presented the question for the motion to approve March minutes. Kui Zhao moved to approve March 2022 minutes, seconded by Peter Hwang, abstained by Nina Basu, motion passed.

III. **PRESENTATION ON BRINGING AFFORDABLE PRENATAL CARE FOR EVERY WOMAN BACK TO HOWARD COUNTY**

Dr. Yvette Oquendo Medical Director with Care First Health Services Division spoke about health and equity that exist where a lack of prenatal care services for all women that live in Howard County Maryland. Dr. Oquendo stated that the need for affordable prenatal care for uninsured women, primarily for immigrants that are not eligible for coverage under the affordable cares act due to their immigration status.

Dr. Oquendo stated that over a decade cuts were made to the public health budget at the state level, which led to the closing of the prenatal clinic that existed in Howard County and was ran by the health department. It is also stated that with the lack of these services forces women who are uninsured and undocumented to seek services outside of Howard County or show up at the time of delivery to Howard County General Hospital.

Dr. Oquendo also states that Racial and Disparities are not new, however the data documenting these disparities in Maryland and Howard County are not abundant.
She mentions that the 2019 report card of community health indicators published by the local health department, along with the infant health indicators data from 2017 that shows 9.1% of Non-Hispanics Black, and 10.7% Hispanic Latino women received late or no prenatal care. This is more than double for Non-Hispanic white women. She also stated that the 2019 data from Maryland Vital records showed that almost 12% of Hispanic mothers and 8% of black mothers received late or no prenatal care. Data from Howard County Community Health shows 14% of Black residents and 11% of Hispanic, Latino Residents report to have no health insurance compared to only 4% of white residents. She states that it is obviously significant health disparities exist. The past 10 years Horizon Foundation which is a healthcare foundation that has been working with Howard County and collaborating with Chase Braxton Healthcare the only federally qualified health center located in Howard County with looking to find sustainable solutions to reduce health disparities and inequities to help these women with prenatal care.

In 2021 the Howard County Equity task force made recommendations to the county council to fund and establish a maternity partnership program such as the maternity partnership program in Montgomery County that could provide prenatal care services supported with county funding in addition to the patients paying a co-pay.

The recommendation and implementation of this maternity partnership program will allow Howard County to close the gap in prenatal care access for all women that reside in the county. The new work group Howard County Health Justice brought together Horizon Foundation, Casa de Maryland, Chase Braxton Healthcare and several Howard County Physicians to advocate and testify in the County Executive Budget hearing asking Dr. Ball for funding to bring back prenatal care to Howard County.

Dr. Ball has announced and included in his 2023 operations budget proposal $1.3 million dollars to support uninsured and underinsured mothers access to quality prenatal care. There is still work in getting the county council to approve it.

Gabriel asked the question if the county health justice, now that Dr. Ball has proposed his budget for 2023, planning a campaign to inform the public, so they can public can contact the county council in support of this? Dr. Oquendo answered, Yes, they are planning a press conference or press release and Dr. Ball will be in attendance and possibly Chase Braxton, and Howard County General sometime in May.

Bianca asked the question of rather due to pandemic will this number bump up because the report given is a report from 2019, Do you see a trend within the past few years due to extraneous conditions that we have experienced? Secondly, will applicants need to reside in the county for the last two years to qualify? Dr. Oquendo stated that she does not suspect that applicants need to have been a county resident for the past two years.

IV. CHAIR’S REPORT

Scott Stated that we are still looking for speakers for October, November, and December of this year. If anyone of the committee members know of anyone who may be interested in speaking please ask them to reach out to the Outreach
Committee.

Scott has introduced New Commissioner, Nina Basu whom was appointed by the County Executive and confirmed. Nina introduced herself as an attorney by training and still practice law and in the community, she is known as the Chrysalis Lady. She is the President and CEO of the Inner Arbor Trust which runs the Chrysalis and Symphony Woods. Nina introduced herself that included all her credentials along with inviting everyone to the opening of the Chrysalis for the annual Asian American festival being held on Saturday, May 1, 2022.

Scott states that he submitted comments on behalf of the commission in support of county council bill CB18-2022. The bill that extends the time to file employment discrimination complaints. The comments were in support of moving six months to 300 days, to be consistent with EEOC practice. The bill passed on April 4, 2022 and signed by the county executive on April 6, 2022 and will take effect 61 days after it was signed.

Scott stated that starting in May, meeting will be held in person at the OHRE office, as well as hybrid and information regarding the meeting room will be provided.

There were no other questions.

V. STUDENT’S REPORT

Scott stated that Sahara was unable to attend today’s meeting, however a written report was submitted, and it stated that Sahara was meeting with her Principal about the utilization and the role of the SRO’s and the school’s security assistance. If anyone has additional questions that they would like to ask, please email them to Sahara so that she can ask them directly when she meets with her Principal.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Outreach:
Kui stated that there are 5 items to discuss.
1. AARP’s AAPI steering committee reached out to Kui to invite AAPI community leaders to participate in a virtual presentation about Mental Health in the Asian Community on May 17, 2022 at 3:00pm. Invitations has been sent out to HRC about 1 week ago. Please let Kui know if you would like to participate so the virtual link can be sent out.

2. The National Asian American Pacific Islander Month is in May. Joan Bryant who is a member of the Merrill Lynch Memorial Product has asked Kui to identify a commissioner who serves on Governor Hogan’s Commission of Asian Pacific Affairs to lead the discussion. Kui recommended and introduced Professor Hung-bin Ding of Loyola University to help lead the book discussion that is in partnership with Baltimore County Library System.
3. Howard County Police Department Minority Officers reached out to a former HRC commissioner and Kui to learn about the commission and information was sent regarding the contact person. Officer Will Harris is invited to attend an HRC meeting whenever he has a chance, possibly for the month of October, November, or December.

4. Kui attended a meeting with the Howard County Conservancy Board on Tuesday, April 19, 2022 to finalize the strategic plan. The Staff expressed concerns regarding Diversity, Inclusion and Equity that touches all areas of the strategic plan.

5. Jonah stated that he will be meeting with Commissioner Bob Ford on Hate Bias Incidents on Monday, April 25, 2022 for the format to report hate bias incidents. Many people don’t report due to not being able to be anonymous. Joan asked the question about the reporting process that is currently in place. Where do you want the reporting to lead us to? Jonah gave examples of what the hate bias forms could do as an added value to hate bias reporting. Also stated that the joint meeting between Outreach and Hate Biased Indicants committees will be virtual for the month of April.

Awards Committee:

Gabriel gave report regarding the solicitation of nominations via survey monkey and press release by OHRE department. Committee would like to retain the same caterer as last year.

Scott asked when will the nominations go out? Gabriel stated sometime in May 2022.

b. Nominating Committee:
Peter stated that no Nominations for the next Student Commissioner as of this meeting.

Peter says he will get an update from Yolanda regarding student nominations.

c. Legislative Committee:
Scott mentioned that the CB18-2022 bill passed to extend the statute of limitations for reporting employment discrimination in the County Council. Maryland State Legislative is finish for the year. The written report updates all the prior bills, and it identifies all the bills that passed and did not pass. 1 bill that passed that was not list that included the tolling time when a complaint can file a civil action for unlawful employment that passed. Committee ran out of time for a federal legislative update and it will be done on the even number months. This will be done by the end of next week and updates will be sent out.

VII. AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Social and Economic Justice:
Joan gave report stating that the committee is planning a virtual panel presentation and are in the process to talk about possible participants. Looking to bring in a previous speaker Liz Glen, from Howard County Housing. Looking to intersect
some housing discussions with economic health, wealth and growth. Tiffany will be reaching to some experts from Montgomery County and relationships with Human Resources Personnel. Looking for 4 to 5 presenters for this planned panel discussion. This is event is planned to be virtual.

b. **Hate Crimes:**
   Bob stated that this committee will be assisting Sahara with her school project regarding school security officers, or assistants. Looking to meet with the school to get answers. Also, the committee will be still focusing on follow up with the Howard County Police Department regarding the Hate Bias. Will be following up with Yolanda and Howard county Police. The 3rd thing the committee is working on a program such as Montgomery County where victims get $2000 who are involved in hate bias incidents. Howard County has nothing in place that could support victims living in the county. Bob asked that Juan could remind Yolanda to send the information regarding Hate Bias information and forward it to the committee.

c. **Public Education:**
   Gabriel stated that they are still working on the script for the video.

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**VIII: EXECUTIVE SECRETARY REPORT**

On behalf of Yolanda Sonnier, Juan Torres gave the report and Fatina Jackson announced her last day with OHRE will be Friday, April 29, 2022 with this committee and will be replaced by Kathy Morales beginning in May 2022. She assured May meeting will be setup for both in-person and virtual. She Thanks everyone, and it was nice meeting and working with everyone. Juan continued with information regarding the assignment of the new Outreach Coordinator Kathy Morales who began working on April 4, 2022. Kathy will be the new Staff person for HRC beginning in May.

He also stated that the Admin Tech announcement is set to close Friday, April 22, 2022. OHRE will moving forward with hiring a temp worker for the time being until the position has been filled. Fatina position will be posting soon, so we are looking for a replacement for her position as well. Please let us know if you know of anyone who would like to apply, please let us know.

EEOC Fair Employment Proxy Agency Commissioners are invited to attend a training May 17-18, 2022 from 2:00pm to 5:00pm. On day 1 the EEOC will be given models of improvement on harassment liability and terrorism discrimination. On day 2 the discussion will be on disability discrimination and unreasonable accommodations.

Scott asked the question of whether this training will be virtual and or recorded. Juan will ask if it will be recorded and get back to the committee members.

Juan stated that on April 1, 2022 there will be 6 Leaders Neuron Coalition opposed violence and extremism and conducting by-standard interracial integration cultural awareness training. On April 5th the office will partnered with coalition opposed to violence and extremism facilitating 2 of the leaders of their experienced training facilitators. This was Claudia, Ramona Brown Carroll and Mary M. Campbell who helped community members complete the training. Then on Saturday April 9th Yolanda facilitated a workshop on Black Women Activism in the United States. This was part of the Hope Works I Am A Woman who manages the workshop series that was held for 4 hours. On April 11th Claudia presented the
bystanders intervention and cultural awareness training to the entire board of the Columbia Association. On April 12th Claudia presented the neighborhood narrative, on how the stories we tell influence the bias we hold to the board of American Association of University Women of Howard County.

On April 14th Claudia presented the same presentation to Howard County Recreation Parks and Office of Aging and Independence, also on April 14th there was a virtual lunch on and learning panel discussion on Religious and Intersectional Narrative on Facebook Live, and YouTube exploring convergence of Easter, Ramadan, and Passover.

On April 26th the Community Outreach will close the month with reading “Believing our 30 Year Journey to Enter Gender Violence” by Anita Hill at the HCLS Miller Branch sponsored by Hope Work and the Howard County Office of Human Trafficking and Prevention. On May 1st the AAPI Heritage Festival will take place and OHRE will be participating. Then on May 24th Wanda Cao an Investigator in the office of OHRE will be facilitate the Reading of Human Rights Discussing the book “Minor Feelings an Asian American Reckoning”.

The last of the report is regarding the 7 Hate Bias Incident letters from the Howard County Police Department in March (1 African American, 1 Latino, 1 Asian, 1 LGBTQ, and 3 unknown as no full report has not been received yet).

Scott asked the question for the Hate Bias Incident Reports of whether these reports are from this year as Yolanda stated in March that there were no reports for this year yet? Juan was not certain as the information he had did not specify, he would look into it and get that information back to the committee.

Lynda Earle asked Juan to repeat the information regarding the hate biased report? With questions regarding what does unknown mean.

Bianca asked the question regarding the upcoming events. She wanted to know if links could be sent out for the upcoming events? Juan will look into this and get back to the committee.

IX. NEW BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Scott allowed the committee to introduce themselves to the new Commissioner Nina Basu.

Scott announced that the Howard County Jewish Federation will be having a Holocaust remembrance state commemoration, which will be virtual. The pre-event at 6:00pm and memorial service candle lighting speaker at 7:00pm on Thursday, April 27, 2022. Jonah is asking to bring back unconscious bias training for the commissioners.

Scott suggested that the committee get a guest speaker for this subject matter. The committee will seek Claudia to come to a future meeting to facilitate the training. The request is being asked to have this training as a separate meeting.

X. CLOSED SESSION

Jonah made a motion to go into closed session, pursuant to General Provisions Art. 3-305(b)(7) to consult with counsel regarding allegations of housing discrimination by OHRE. Nina seconded the motion. Each Commissioner voted in favor of the motion; The Commission held a closed session from 8:09 pm through 8:35 pm.
XI. ADJOURMENT
The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Next Meeting: May 19, 2022 at 7pm