

2024

# HOWARD COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUITY

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2024 ANNUAL REPORT

# EVERYONE DESERVES TO LIVE FREE OF DISCRIMINATION

The Howard County Office of Human Rights and Equity (OHRE) is an entity of Howard County Government that seeks to eradicate discrimination, increase equal opportunity, ensure shared organizational understanding of equity and social justice matters, and protect and promote the human rights of county residents.



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# INTRODUCTION TO THE OFFICE

The Office of Human Rights and Equity (OHRE) was established in 1975 and is governed by the Howard County Code, Section 12.200-12.221. OHRE serves as a catalyst in fostering attitudes and beliefs among Howard County residents to confirm that all individuals have an equal opportunity to enjoy a wholesome and productive quality of life and can pursue their lives free of discrimination.

In order to fulfill its mission to eradicate discrimination, increase equal opportunity, and protect and promote Human Rights in the county, OHRE investigates claims of discrimination, initiates and participates in outreach and educational initiatives, events, and programs; and recommends policies on civil and human rights to the County Executive. The Office also cooperates with other local, state, and federal agencies to protect and promote better human relations.

**This 2024 Annual Report for the Office of Human Rights and Equity is an essential overview of the status of civil and human rights in Howard County.**

OHRE Administrator Yolanda Sonnier  
(2019-2024)





## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive  
cball@howardcountymd.gov

www.howardcountymd.gov  
FAX 410-313-3051



Dear Residents,

I am excited to present the 2024 Annual Report for the Howard County Office of Human Rights & Equity (OHRE). In this report you will also receive reports for the Howard County Human Rights Commission (HRC), the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission, La Alianza Latina Commission, the LGBTQIA+ Commission, and the Asian American and Pacific Islander Commission (AAPI). This comprehensive report provides a broad range of data and information detailing the educational, outreach, and investigative actions of the OHRE as they safeguard the public from hate bias and discrimination.

The OHRE has the responsibility under the Howard County Human Rights Code to administer and enforce human rights laws, conduct investigations, and process and resolve complaints of unlawful discrimination in areas of employment, housing, public accommodations, financing, and law enforcement. The office has diligently fulfilled this mission and has expanded its scope to include the development of high-quality education and outreach, creation of countywide events celebrating our rich cultural diversity, and the management of several commissions, workgroups, and other community initiatives.

The work of eradicating exclusion, bigotry, and discrimination in a shifting national and global landscape remains both challenging and complex. Despite our determined efforts here in Howard County, the impact of hate cannot be understated, and we must always remain diligent in our response. This year, the OHRE rose to the occasion, focusing its efforts on creating a more inclusive and welcoming workforce within Howard County government, expanding and strengthening relationships with community partners, and making clear a simple, yet powerful, message: hate has no place in Howard County.

This work would not be possible without the contribution of leaders within our community, and I would like to thank all of our commissioners who volunteer their time and effort to provide service and programming to ensure Howard County is an inclusive place for all.

I particularly wish to express my gratitude to Administrator Yolanda F. Sonnier for her five years of leadership and dedication to ensuring the OHRE fulfilled its mission with excellence. This 2024 report shows that she and her team efficiently resolved complex cases, reached new communities with initiatives and programming, all while staffing the programming and efforts of five commissions. I am grateful to the OHRE staff for their dedication, professionalism, and service to our community.

Sincerely,

Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive





# HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

3430 Courthouse Drive

■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■

410-313-2171

Voice/Relay

Brandee Ganz, Chief Administrative Officer  
bganz@howardcountymd.gov



Dear Friends,

As 2024 draws to a close, I am happy that Howard County continues to lead our state and our nation as one of the best places to live, work, play, grow, and thrive for all. Through the hard work of our Office of Human Rights & Equity (OHRE), we ensure that Howard County continues to fulfill our promise that we remain a place where all can feel safe, celebrated, and respected.

Throughout the year, OHRE does the important work of investigating cases of discrimination in the workplace, housing, public accommodations, financing, and law enforcement. In 2024, the OHRE's Investigations Unit closed 64 cases, with the top bases for discrimination experienced in Howard County being race, retaliation, disability, and sex.

In addition to the critical work of the Investigations Unit, the OHRE ensures organizations, businesses, government employees, and residents receive top tier anti-discrimination trainings and programs that celebrate the unique cultures and communities that make up our great county. Their commitment to the training and professional development of Howard County staff and leadership led to them winning a 2024 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties for creating an ecosystem for racial equity, inclusion, and belonging through the Racial Equity Leadership Lab (RELL).

Unfortunately, despite the tireless work of this office, Howard County has not been untouched by the national trend of rising hate. As of December 31, 2024, there were 58 reports of Hate Bias Incidents (HBIs) here in our county, with the highest number of incidents reported involving race, ethnicity, and/or ancestry; religion, and gender and sexuality.

We know that hate crime and hate bias incidents are frequently underreported, which is why if you believe you were targeted in any way because of hate or bias, or if you observe hateful images, behavior or speech, I urge you to contact police to make a report. In Howard County we log every reported incident and believe that even the cases that are inconclusive are important to track to ensure we are monitoring any and all HBI incidents and possible trends. There is simply no place for hateful words or acts in Howard County.

As we look forward to 2025 we know that the anti-discrimination work spearheaded by this Office will continue to be essential as we work together to keep our county welcoming, safe, and inclusive for all. I thank outgoing Administrator Yolanda F. Sonnier for her service, and I welcome LaKeisha McClendon as our new OHRE Administrator. I know that she will continue to do the good work on behalf of all our residents.

Sincerely,

*Brandee Ganz*

Brandee Ganz  
Chief Administrative Officer



# HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

9820 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 237 ■ Columbia, Maryland 21046 ■ 410-313-6430

Brandee Ganz, Chief Administrative Officer

Voice/Relay

Yolanda F. Sonnier, Administrator, Office of Human Rights and Equity  
ysonnier@howardcountymd.gov

FAX 410-313-6468



Dear Howard County Residents:

In my final message regarding my role as the Administrator of the Office of Human Rights & Equity (OHRE), I am pleased to present our 2024 Annual Report. OHRE works to support and promote the belief that everyone has the right to live, work, play, and study free from discrimination.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the OHRE staff for all of their efforts to ensure a county that is free from discrimination and inequity. Our team has worked tirelessly to investigate cases of discrimination, increase awareness of human rights concerns, deepen our connection with diverse communities throughout Howard County, and utilize unique and novel tools and methods to expand our educational offerings.

We experienced a year of innovation in 2024 as we envisaged new ways to continue protecting and promoting human rights. Perhaps most significantly, we held our first OHRE Humanity Matters Conference, welcoming over 140 attendees across the government, education, and human rights sectors to engage in a full day of workshops, deep community connection, and dialogue. In partnership with the LGBTQIA+ Commission, we welcomed over 150 community members to our first in-person celebration honoring Transgender Day of Visibility. In collaboration with a team of community partners, we presented the first "State of Black Affairs in Howard County", addressing the marked increase in anti-Black hate bias incidents. We even held our first ever Social Media Takeover for International Youth Day, elevating the voices of Howard County youth on topics including youth advocacy, period stigma, teen mental health, racism in Howard County, and youth civic engagement.

Such work has made it my honor to serve as the Administrator for the OHRE during the last five years, ensuring the protection and promotion of human rights for all throughout our county. There is always more work to be done to address discrimination, hate, and inequity, but I remain hopeful and look forward to the contributions and accomplishments of the OHRE beyond my tenure as Administrator.

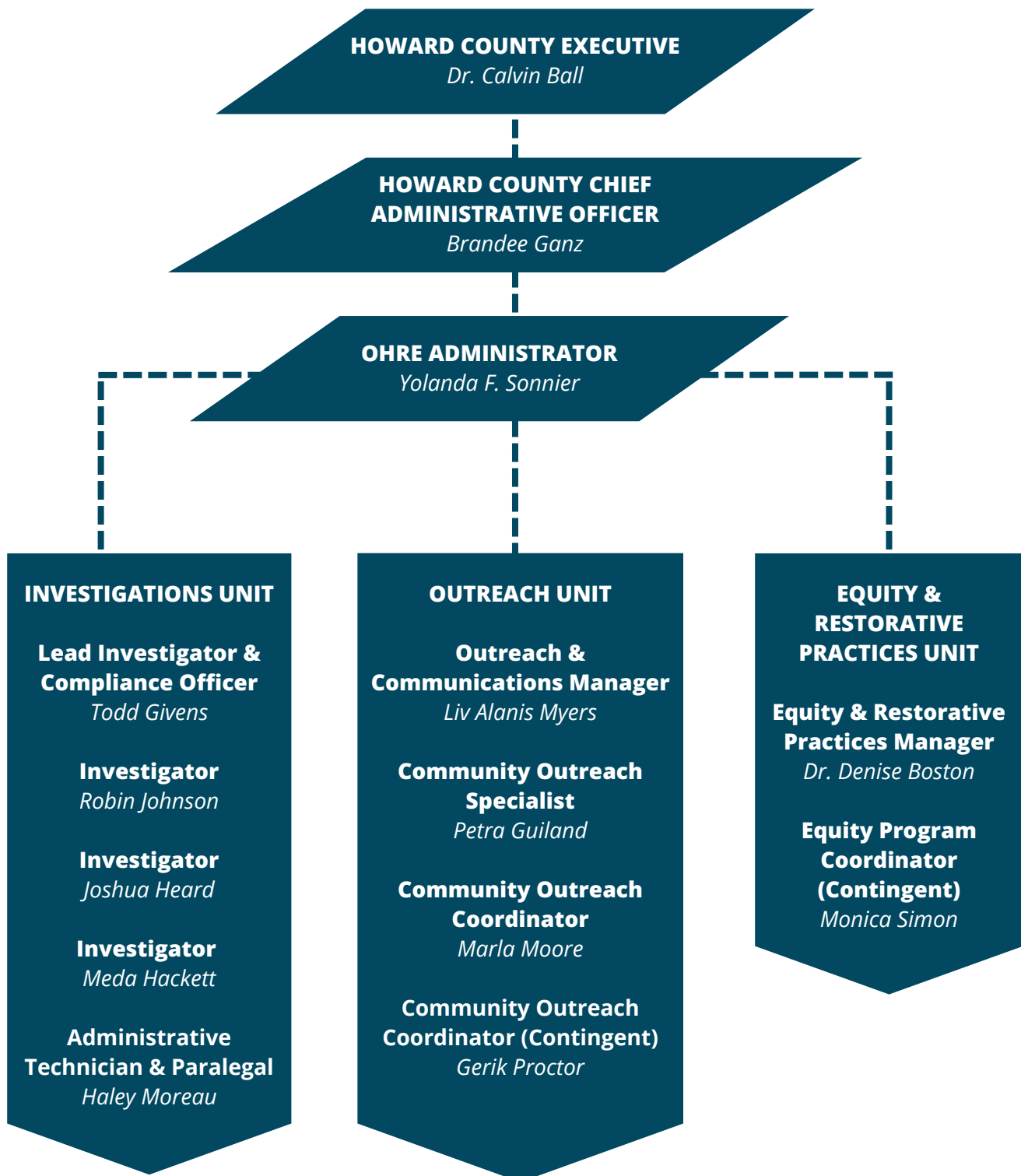
As I move on to continuing this work at the state level as Deputy Director of the Maryland Commission for Civil Rights, I wish to extend my sincerest gratitude to Howard County Executive Calvin Ball and his team for their unwavering support of the OHRE's mission to eradicate discrimination in Howard County. Additionally, our work would be meaningless without the communities we serve, and to that end I wish to thank the Commissioners, community groups, and partners that have given us the gift of their time, engagement, and investment.

In gratitude and service,

*Yolanda F. Sonnier*

Yolanda F. Sonnier  
Administrator

# STAFF MEMBERS & ORGANIZATIONAL CHART





## ADMINISTRATOR

Appointed by the County Executive, the Administrator is charged with representing the County Executive in administering and enforcing the provisions of Howard County Human Rights Law.



**Yolanda F. Sonnier**  
Administrator



**Haley Moreau**  
Administrative Technician & Paralegal

## INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

Investigates complaints of discrimination; resolves complaints by conference, mediation, conciliation, or litigation; and enforces the Howard County Human Rights Code.



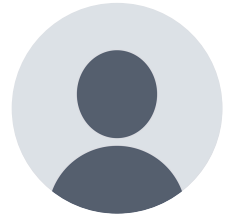
**Todd E. Givens**  
Lead Investigator & Compliance Officer



**Robin Johnson**  
Investigator



**Joshua Heard**  
Investigator



**Meda Hackett**  
Investigator

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH UNIT

Hosts trainings, workshops, listening sessions and events geared towards government agencies, organizations and community members, focusing on racial equity, social justice, and human relations.



**Liv Alanis Myers**  
Outreach & Communications Manager



**Petra Guiland**  
Outreach Specialist



**Marla Moore**  
Outreach Coordinator



**Gerik Proctor**  
Outreach Coordinator (Contingent)

## EQUITY & RESTORATIVE PRACTICES UNIT

Oversees the development, coordination, and administration of racial and social equity policies and practices for Howard County Government.



**Dr. Denise Boston**  
Equity & Restorative Practices Manager



**Monica Simon**  
Equity Program Coordinator (Contingent)

### Key



Administrative



Investigative Unit



Outreach Unit



Equity Unit

# FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE AGENCY (FEPA)

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is authorized by statute to use the services of state and local Fair Employment Practice Agency offices, such as the Howard County OHRE, to assist in meeting its mandate to enforce Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA), and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA).

The OHRE has been an honored FEPA designee since 1984.

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# INVESTIGATIONS UNIT



**Investigates and processes complaints of unlawful discrimination in five areas: Employment, Housing, Public Accommodations, and Financing.**

**The Office accepts complaints by Law Enforcement, but the complaint will be investigated by the Howard County Police Department.**

### WHAT WE DO

- Resolve complaints by conference, conciliation or mediation
- Enforce the Howard County Human Rights Law
- Recommend Policies on Civil and Human Rights to the County Executive

### FEDERAL & COUNTY DISCRIMINATION LAWS

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA)
- Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)
- ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA)
- Howard County Code: Title 12, Subtitle 2, Section 12.200-12.221



**Todd E. Givens**  
(he/him)

Lead Investigator &  
Compliance Officer



**Robin Johnson**  
(she/her)

Investigator



**Joshua Heard**  
(he/him)

Investigator



**Meda Hackett**  
(she/her)

Investigator



**Haley Moreau**  
(she/her)

Administrative  
Technician  
& Paralegal

HOWARD COUNTY CODE: SUBTITLE 2, SECTION 12.200-12.221



## CHARGE OF DISCRIMINATION & COMPLAINT PROCESS

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### HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT

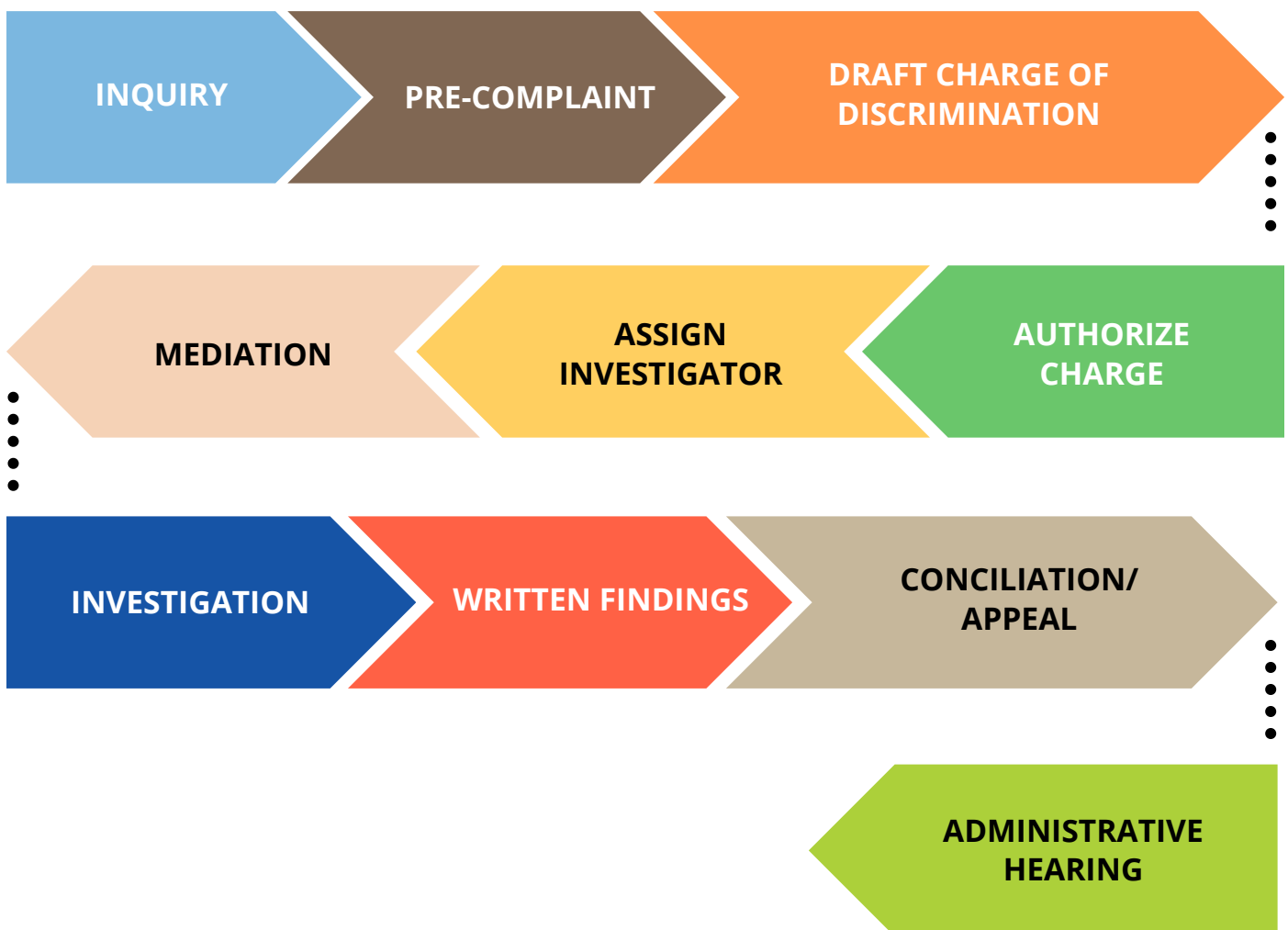
If you feel that you have been unlawfully discriminated against, you should contact the OHRE by:

- Completing an online inquiry form on the OHRE website; or
- Contacting OHRE at OHRE@howardcountymd.gov or 410-313-6430

All complaints must be filed within the statutory timeframe following the alleged discrimination.

- **EMPLOYMENT COMPLAINTS** must be filed within three hundred (300) days from the date of the alleged discrimination.
  - **HOUSING COMPLAINTS** must be filed within one (1) year from the date of the alleged discrimination.
  - **FINANCING, PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION & LAW ENFORCEMENT COMPLAINTS** must be filed within six (6) months from the date of the alleged discrimination.
- 

### COMPLAINT PROCESS





# 2024 CASELOAD ANALYSIS

This caseload analysis is broken down into the following sections: Cases by Basis, Monetary Awards, and Closed Cases. This report also includes statistics regarding the Hate Bias Incidents (HBIs) that occurred in Howard County, MD in 2024.

## 87 FILED CASES

74

EMPLOYMENT

9

HOUSING

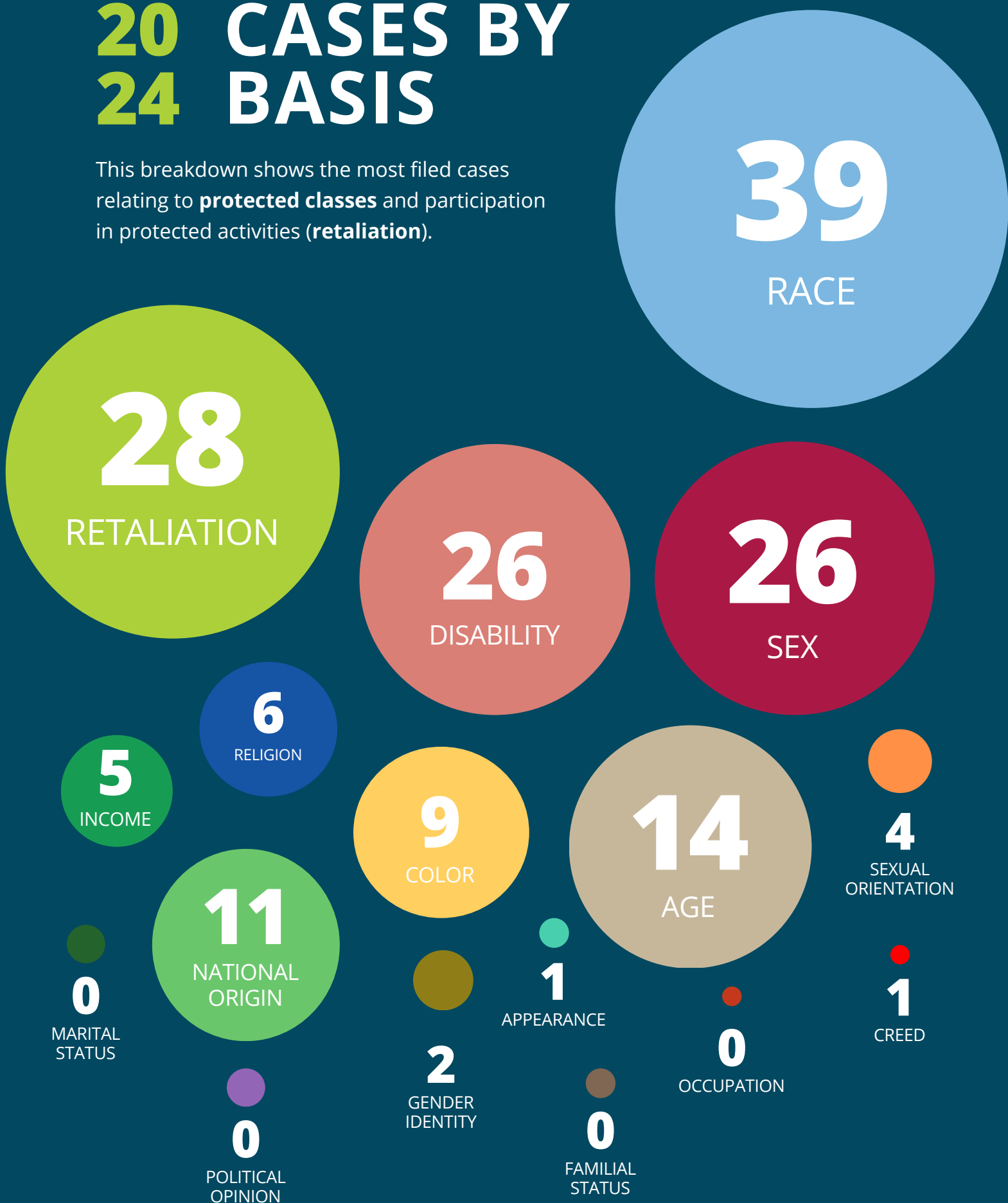
4

PUBLIC  
ACCOMMODATIONS

The 87 total cases filed came from 116 inquiries made in 2024, as well as cases transferred from the EEOC.

# 20 CASES BY 24 BASIS

This breakdown shows the most filed cases relating to **protected classes** and participation in protected activities (**retaliation**).



Monetary settlement awards in 2024 totaled \$312,220, marking a significant increase from \$166,850 awarded in 2023.

MONTH	2022	2023	2024
January		\$37,000	\$17,360
February			\$5,000
March	\$10,000		\$2,500
April	\$50,000		\$55,500
May			\$5,000
June	\$73,500	\$1,500	\$4,360
July		\$20,000	\$9,500
August			\$121,000
September		\$15,350	\$3,000
October	\$9,500	\$20,000	\$89,000
November	\$72,500	\$68,000	
December		\$5,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$215,500</b>	<b>\$166,850</b>	<b>\$312,220</b>

# 64 CASES CLOSED IN 2024

82.8% of closed cases in 2024 were employment cases, whereas 15.6% of closed cases were housing cases.

53

EMPLOYMENT  
CASES

10

HOUSING  
CASES

1

PUBLIC  
ACCOMMODATIONS  
CASE



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# **HATE BIAS INCIDENT REPORTS**

**OHRE receives reports of Hate Bias Incidents (HBIs) from the Howard County Police Department (HCPD). We believe that all HBIs are important and ensure they are taken seriously. These numbers assist with defining certain trends, which will better help with policy in order to keep residents safe.**

### **HATE BIAS INCIDENT**

A Hate Bias Incident is any form of hostile expression, language, or behavior that may be motivated by another person's race, color, disability, religion, national origin, or gender identity. Although they are offensive, *they are not illegal*.

### **HATE CRIME**

A Hate Crime is a criminal act motivated by bias against another person's race, color, disability, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or gender identity that violates the law. This includes verbal, physical, or visual expressions that have a criminal intent.

### **INVESTIGATIVE PROCESS**

When Howard County officers respond to a hate-bias incident or hate crime, they thoroughly investigate and take immediate enforcement action, if possible. Notifications are made to supervisors, commanders, and the Community Outreach Section for tracking and reporting, as well as the OHRE. As a commitment to provide closure for victims of HBIs, a follow-up report on the investigation is conducted every 10 days by the initial responding officer, until all investigative leads are exhausted.

When Howard County officers determine an incident is classified as a "hate crime" because it includes a criminal act, it is investigated with the goal of making an arrest whenever possible. In these cases, an additional hate-related charge may apply, in conjunction with the primary criminal violation. This is based on the violator's motive and intent.

**Report a HBI or Hate Crime:** Call 911 or Non-Emergency, (410) 313-2200

**Talk to HCPD about issues of exclusivity:** [HCPDoutreach@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:HCPDoutreach@howardcountymd.gov)

**Contact OHRE:** Call (410) 313-6430 or email [OHRE@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:OHRE@howardcountymd.gov)

# 58 HATE BIAS INCIDENT REPORTS IN 2024

THIS REPORT ACCOUNTS FOR HBIS REPORTED BY DECEMBER 31, 2024

## TOP 3 BIAS MOTIVATION CATEGORIES

62%

**RACE, ETHNICITY,  
AND/OR ANCESTRY**

43% BLACK  
10% HISPANIC OR LATINO  
3% ASIAN  
2% WHITE  
2% AMERICAN INDIAN/NATIVE  
ALASKAN  
2% OTHER RACIAL ETHNICITY/  
ANCESTRY

24%

**RELIGION**

19% JEWISH | 5% MUSLIM

12%

**GENDER AND SEXUALITY**

7% LGBTQIA+ | 5% FEMALE

## TOP BIAS MOTIVATION SUB-CATEGORIES (% OF ALL REPORTS)

43%

**ANTI-BLACK OR  
AFRICAN AMERICAN**

19%

**ANTI-JEWISH**

10%

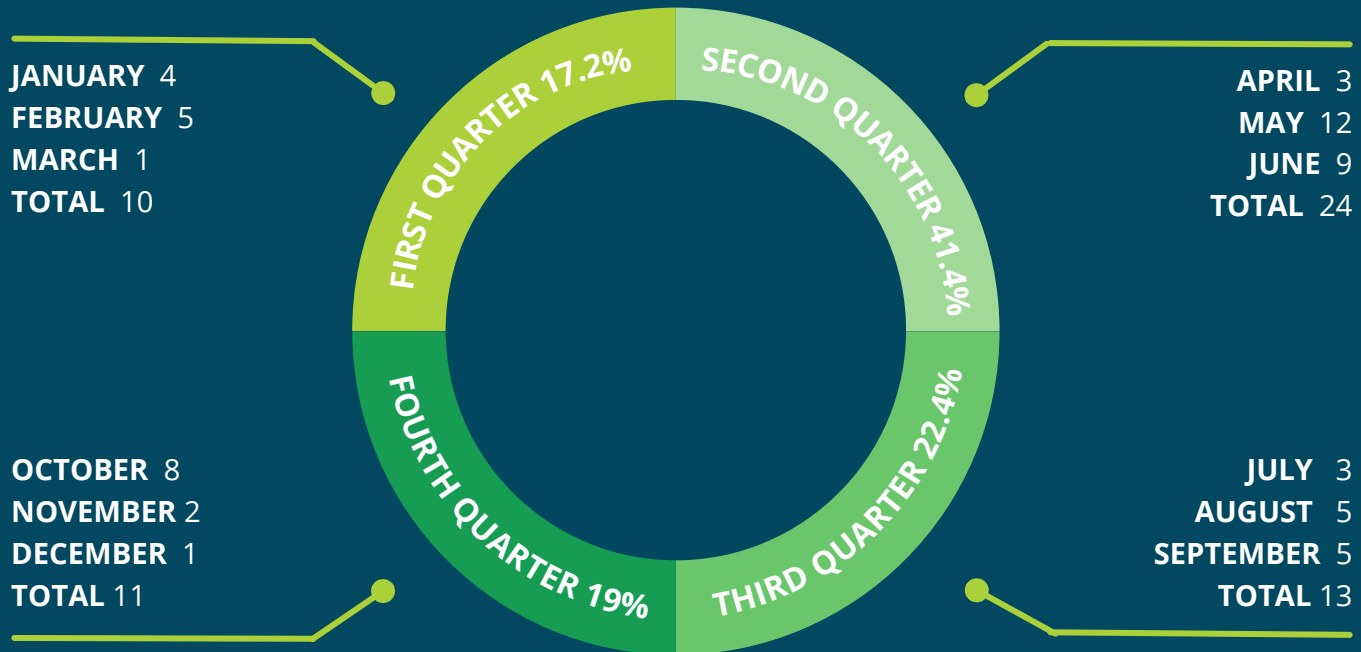
**ANTI-HISPANIC OR  
LATINO**

7%

**ANTI-LGBTQIA+**

# HATE BIAS INCIDENTS BY MONTH IN 2024

THIS REPORT ACCOUNTS FOR HBIS REPORTED BY DECEMBER 31, 2024



Howard County police officers document every report where any person perceives that an incident may have been motivated by bias, even if that motivation can never be determined or proven.

If you believe you were targeted in any way because of hate or bias, or if you observe hateful images, behavior or speech, you should immediately call police by dialing 911 or non-emergency, **410-313-2200**. Never hesitate to contact police to make a report so that your incident can be addressed and HCPD can more effectively track patterns or trends.

In an effort to remain inclusive to all residents in Howard County, the HCPD has full-time community outreach officers who serve as liaisons to various ethnic and cultural groups. For more information on how these liaisons can conduct meetings and/or presentations for your community, please contact **HCPDoutreach@howardcountymd.gov**.

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH UNIT



**The Outreach Unit serves the efforts and increases the presence of the Office of Human Rights & Equity in Howard County, Maryland by creating opportunities for residents to affirm their humanity while protecting that of their neighbor's.**

### 3 PILLARS OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- Cultural Awareness
- Transformative Communication
- Servant-Minded Engagement

### WHAT WE DO

- Initiate and participate in outreach activities and events with governmental and community organizations
- Serve as a liaison with the public, governmental agencies, and community groups to develop educational programs which heighten public awareness of discrimination and methods of eliminating discrimination
- Provide trainings, presentations, listening sessions, and events to government agencies, organizations, and community members around equity, social justice, and human relations
- Develop and distribute communications materials to engage diverse communities and groups in Howard County
- Create opportunities to proactively collaborate with community groups and partners in an effort to heighten community participation and voice in OHRE outputs



**Liv Alanis Myers**  
(they/elle)  
Outreach &  
Communications Manager



**Petra Guiland**  
(she/her)  
Outreach Specialist



**Marla Moore**  
(she/her)  
Outreach Coordinator



**Gerik Proctor**  
(he/him)  
Contingent Outreach  
Coordinator (Jul-Oct)

**13**

WEBINARS

**48**

EVENTS HOSTED  
OR ATTENDED

**100+**

COMMUNITY  
PARTNERSHIPS

**71**

ORIGINAL  
EDUCATIONAL  
VIDEOS

**17**

TRAININGS

**4,000+**

ATTENDEES AT  
OHRE EVENTS



## OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS



### The State of Black Affairs in Howard County February 29, 2024

OHRE partnered with the African American Community Roundtable, the Howard County Chapter of the NAACP, St. John Baptist Church, Columbia Community Care, the Fairway Independent Mortgage Corporation, and the Flowers Home Team to present “The State of Black Affairs in Howard County.” This event featured opportunities for residents and elected officials to learn about the concerns and issues facing African American residents in Howard County in the areas of Housing, Finance, Business, Human Rights, Law Enforcement, and Education.

### Hate Has No Place May 15, 2024

Representatives from the Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center, Howard County Police Department, Howard County State's Attorney's Office, the Maryland Attorney General's office, Jewish Federation of Howard County, Howard County Muslim Council, and the African American Community Roundtable served as panelists at OHRE's second public forum on reporting hate crimes and hate bias incidents (HBIs).



### Caribbean American Heritage Month Celebration June 30, 2024

OHRE was proud to work in partnership with the Caribbean American community to welcome over 2,000 community members and visitors to Color Burst Park for Howard County's third annual Caribbean American Heritage Month Celebration, in a day that championed the diverse and vibrant heritage of the Caribbean here in Howard County.



### Women's Equality Day August 28, 2024

OHRE hosted its third Women's Equality Day Celebration at the East Columbia 50+ Center, where a group of nearly 100 women and allies came together to join in community and confirm their commitment to fighting for a future where ALL women are treated equally. The event featured a keynote address by Londyn Smith de Richelieu, the first trans woman to join Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott's cabinet and the inaugural director of the Baltimore City Office for LGBTQ Affairs.







### Native American Heritage Month Celebration November 2, 2024

OHRE partnered with hosts Howard County Library System as well as Nava Be Dine', Downtown Columbia Partnership, Columbia Community Care, Howard Hughes Corporation, and Columbia Association to bring this year's beautiful celebration of indigenous pride, history, and heritage here in Howard County to Color Burst Park. The event featured award-winning author Traci Sorell, comedian Jamar Hall, entertainer Brett Walking Eagle, arts and crafts, authentic vendors, and delicious treats.

### Annual Kwanzaa Celebration December 28, 2024

Almost 300 community members joined the OHRE for a vibrant, family-oriented, festive celebration at the Harriet Tubman Cultural Center. The 2024 celebration was an unforgettable experience filled with family-friendly activities, inspirational speakers, live performances, and a showcase of local artisans and vendors. Friends, family, and the community joined together to reflect, celebrate, and embrace the spirit of Kwanzaa.



### COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING TOPICS (SELECTED)

- Bystander Intervention & Cultural Awareness
- Neighborhood Narratives: How the Stories We Tell Influence the Biases We Hold
- Blindspot Book Study
- Community Ambassador Training
- Decolonization and Restorative Justice
- How Culture Informs Perspective
- Racial Trauma and Mental Health
- Ableism, Ageism & The Intersections Between
- Cultural Implications & Diversity Training
- Performative Allyship
- Disability Employment Awareness
- HCC Black Student Union Speaker Series
- Interfaith Leadership
- The Intersection of Juneteenth and Pride
- A History of Racist US Immigration Policy
- Youth Voice and Advocacy

### OUTREACH EVENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS (SELECTED)

- Human Rights Day in Annapolis with the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR)
- Long Reach High School Black History Expo
- Women's Giving Circle 2024 Annual Celebration and Pink Party
- Yom HaShoah Commemoration - Stumbling Stones to Remember: A Loved One Lived Here
- Books and Bloom
- Old Ellicott City Pride
- Change in Columbia: A New Immigrant Experience
- Community Day at United Methodist Church
- Harriet Tubman Day with the Harriet Tubman Cultural Center
- HCPSS Parent Academy Kickoff
- Frederick Douglass: A Novel with the Baha'i Local Spiritual Assembly's Taskforce for Race Unity
- African American Community Roundtable (AACR) Homecoming
- Walking While Black: L.O.V.E. is the Answer Screening

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# EQUITY & RESTORATIVE PRACTICES UNIT



**The Equity and Restorative Practices Unit (ERPU) looks to ensure a shared understanding of racial equity and social justice by supporting departments and staff for transformational changes and operational equitable practices, policies, and procedures that result in more fair and just outcomes.**

### **7 CORE BELIEFS OF ERPU**

- Learning & equity mindfulness
- Social and racial justice
- Ethic of service
- Inclusion matters
- Restorative practice framework
- Authentic and diverse coalitions
- Integrity

### **WHAT WE DO**

- Serve as a county-wide resource, information, and training hub that focuses on supporting Government departments by normalizing conversations about equity, inclusion, and belonging and operationalizing new equitable practices and policies
- Provide training, workshops, and presentations for staff, ensuring everyone has an opportunity to work across departments and sectors, and build a learning community that promotes a fair and equitable community
- Develop equity and inclusive assessments to help create action plans, ensuring that all departments are working towards equity goals
- Create opportunities to build capacity within government on how data helps to understand disparities, inequities, and best practices
- Initiate and participate in community coalition building events that involve working with community stakeholders to understand their needs, co-create solutions, and implement strategies that ensure everyone has the ability to thrive



**Dr. Denise Boston**

Equity & Restorative  
Practices Manager



**Monica Simon**

Equity Program  
Coordinator  
(Contingent)

## ENGAGEMENT DATA

**20**

RACIAL EQUITY  
LEADERSHIP LAB  
PARTICIPANTS

**8**

COMMUNITY  
EVENTS AND  
WORKSHOPS

**13**

EQUITY ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE  
MEMBERS

**3**

INTERAGENCY  
COMMITTEES

**30**

NEW GOVERNMENT  
ALLIANCE ON RACE  
AND EQUITY  
MEMBERS

**160+**

HOCO  
EMPLOYEES  
TRAINED



## 2024 Equity Advisory Committee (EAC)

The Equity Advisory Committee (EAC) is comprised of 16 members who represent various position levels, departments, and scopes of work within Howard County Government. In 2024, the EAC subcommittees developed a plan of action to meet the goals and objectives of the 2025-26 Howard County Racial Equity Strategic Plan. Members attended the Race Forward 'Facing Race: Our Power, Our Solutions' national conference in St. Louis, MO. EAC also provided resources and facilitated equity-focused activities at the 2024 Diversity Day Celebration.



## Racial Equity Leadership Lab (RELL)

The RELL professional development 5-module cohort leadership series was offered this year to Cohort 3 and 4 in the Spring and Fall. This program, developed and facilitated by Dr. Denise Boston provided a series of five-modules for government leaders with the following goals and objectives: to acquire strategies for addressing racial inequities in Howard County Government departments and offices; to focus on values that guide leadership work for racial and social justice; to ensure a collective and reflective approach to confronting interpersonal, institutional, and structural racism; and to apply a racial equity lens in decision-making.



## COMMITTEES AND WORKGROUPS

- Howard County Library System (HCLS) Racial Equity Alliance
- Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee (DEIAC)
- OHRE Climate Subcabinet Work Group in Emergency Preparedness

## WEBINARS

- The Power of Engaging Community Voices Through the Howard County Racial Equity Community Survey
- Community Change Agents Creating Equitable & Inclusive Communities
- Racial Equity Through the Lens of History, Culture, and Community Healing
- Youth Change Agents
- Advancing Racial Equity Through Howard County Government

## SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS (SELECTED)

- Fostering Hope: A Youth Mental Health Summit
- Howard Community College Career Panel
- Unity in Diversity: Celebrating Our Shared Humanity
- Black History Month Program at Dayton Oaks Elementary School
- Leadership Howard County: Leadership Premier Class of 2024 Program
- Youth Engagement Leadership Work Group
- HCC Silas Craft Career Development Workshop -Reflect on Your Past, Acknowledge Who You Are Today and Project Yourself into the Future

## TRAININGS (SELECTED)

- Racial Equity Leadership and Staff Training Series
- Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Introductory Course

# OHRE HUMANITY MATTERS CONFERENCE

**140+**  
**ATTENDEES**

**10**  
**WORKSHOPS**

On May 6, 2024, over 140 attendees, presenters, vendors, and OHRE support staff gathered for a full-day in-person conference entitled "Humanity Matters: Envisioning Social Justice Through an Equity Lens." The conference took place at the Turf Valley Resort in Ellicott City, Maryland, and was sponsored by The Horizon Foundation, Angels Alert Assisted Living, and Dayton Oaks Elementary School Black History Month Committee





### 1. A Regional View: Advancing Racial Equity in Local Government Procurement

Presenters: Shana Terry, *Chief Procurement Officer (Prince William County, VA)* & Sarah Alvarez, *Program Manager, Policy Analyst, Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (Montgomery County, MD)*

### 2. Building and Sustaining Diverse Community Through Equitable Practices

Presenter: Dr. Anthony Ferguson, Jr., Ed.D, *Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer (Prince George's County, MD)*

### 3. Leveraging Racial Equity Impact Assessments for Change

Panelists:

- Rhiannon Reeves, *Program Manager, Policy Analyst, Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (Montgomery County, MD)*;
- Linda Price, *Program Manager, Policy Analyst, Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (Montgomery County, MD)*;
- Janmarie Peña, *Performance Management and Data Analyst (Montgomery County, MD)*

### 4. Cultivating Systemic Change by Elevating the Latinx/es in the Workplace

Presenter: Genesis Aguilar Chavez, *Consultant*

### 5. Identifying, Reporting, and Preventing Hate Crimes: A Federal Perspective

Panelists:

- Dr. Denise Nazaire, *Lead Conciliation Specialist, U.S. Dept. of Justice*;
- Sarah Marquardt, *Chief of USAO-MD's Civil Rights and Special Victims Section*;
- Keith Murray, *Special Agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation*

### 6. Building Budgets that Advance Racial Equity

Panelists:

- Sarah Alvarez, *Program Manager, Policy Analyst, Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (Montgomery County, MD)*;
- Rhiannon Reeves, *Program Manager, Policy Analyst, Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (Montgomery County, MD)*;
- Linda Price, *Program Manager, Policy Analyst, Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (Montgomery County, MD)*;
- Tiffany Ward, *Chief Equity Officer and Director of the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (Montgomery County, MD)*

### 7. Black Historic Sites Matter Too: Museums as Spaces of Healing, Restoration, and Community Care

Presenter: Marcus "Sankofa" Nicks, *Assistant Director, Silas Craft Collegians Program Howard Community College*

### 8. Making Partnerships to Bridge the Digital Divide

Presenter: Malarie Burgess, *Digital Inclusion Specialist, Office on Aging and Independence (Howard County, MD)*

### 9. The HoCo Culture Lab

Presenter: Mallorie Kristoffersen, *Creative Cultural Consultant & Ethnographer (Howard County, MD)*

### 10. Closing Community Gathering.





# AWARDS & RECOGNITION

In 2024, the National Association of Counties (NACo) awarded the Office of Human Rights & Equity with a 2024 NACo Achievement Award in the category of County Administration and Management for *Creating An Ecosystem for Racial Equity, Inclusion & Belonging: Investing in Cross-System Leadership*.





*Appointed by Executive Order by the County Executive and the County Council, the Office of Human Rights & Equity staffs five Commissions. The work of each Commission varies, but each are committed to furthering human rights and equity throughout the County in their own very distinct capacities.*

Our commissions assist in advancing equal opportunity for county residents, while exploring new ways to partner with the OHRE to protect and promote the human rights of all.

# HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION





Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The Howard County Human Rights Commission is proud of the work it has done to cultivate a community where the ideals of diversity, equity, inclusion, belongingness, respect, and non-discrimination are interwoven into everyday life.

The Commissioners have been active in the community participating in various activities and events throughout the year, including but not limited to, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration and Day of Service, the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Festival, the AAPI Lunar New Year Celebration, Women's Equity Day, National Night Out, the Trans Day of Visibility, and the NAACP Luncheon and Recognition Ceremony.

Commissioners participated in the Office of Human Rights and Equity Open House to educate residents about the work that we do in the community and our mission, as well as encourage residents to join the Commission. The education and outreach did not stop there as members of the Commission also participated in Racial Equity Focus Groups aimed toward providing feedback and insight on perceptions of racial equality and experiences of diversity, inclusion and belonging in Howard County.

At the monthly meetings of the Commission, we continued our custom of having guest speakers in areas related to the mission and goals of the Commission to attend and speak at our monthly meetings. Our speakers included individuals representing organizations such as Luminus, the Howard County Conservancy, and Howard County Public Schools. We were also honored to have the Director of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs from the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives present at a meeting.

In January 2024, the Commission held its annual retreat to set goals and focus areas for the year. A slate of five committees was approved: Governance & Nominating, Outreach & Education, Award Ceremony, Legislation, and Hate Bias Incidents. Throughout the year, the Commission heard appeals of cases of alleged discrimination. During 2024, the Commission decided four appeals and three contested cases where they issued a decision and order after administrative hearing. Further, members of the Commission continued their pursuit of education to help eradicate discrimination by participating in the Civil & Human Rights Conference sponsored by The Maryland Association of Human Rights and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in September 2024.

As in past years, in October 2024 we held our annual Human Rights Commission Awards Ceremony at the Owen Brown Interfaith Center. The awards ceremony honors individuals and community organizations for contributions to human and civil rights in Howard County. The purpose of these awards is to recognize exemplary citizenship, dedicated leadership, and outstanding achievement in eliminating or eradicating discrimination, while advancing human rights for all residents. We recognized four awardees for their selfless work, devotion, and commitment to improving the community by uplifting others: Dwanna Nicole (recipient of the James E. Henson Sr. & Jean W. Toomer Award); Columbia (MD) Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. (recipient of the Colette Roberts Organization Award); and Ishaan Busireddy (recipient of the Dr. Murray Simon Student Award).

The above achievements are the result of the resolute and hard-working members the Commission, in conjunction with the leadership, guidance, and staff of the Office of Human Rights and Equity. We look forward to continuing this important work and uplifting others in 2025 and beyond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tiffany Releford".

Tiffany Releford  
Acting Chair, Howard County Human Rights Commission

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) was established in 1969. It is comprised of 11 voting members and one non-voting student member. Commissioners live in Howard County and represent the diversity of county residents. The duties and responsibilities of the Commission are prescribed by law and include recommending civil rights policy to the County Executive and the County Council. This includes having the authority to conduct surveys and studies concerning civil liberties in order to promote equality in the community.

### VISION

To create a county where the human rights of all are respected and protected.

### MISSION

To cultivate a community where the ideals of equity, inclusion, respect, and non-discrimination are interwoven into everyday life.

### PURPOSE

The Human Rights Commission will protect and promote human rights by:

- Engaging and educating the community.
- Studying and investigating human rights issues.
- Proposing and improving policies on human rights.
- Interpreting and enforcing the Howard County Human Rights Code.

### COMMISSIONERS

1. **Lynda Earle** (Exp: 3/1/24), *Chair until September 2024*
2. **Gabriel (Gab) Antonio Terrasa** (Rsg: 10/18/25), *Vice Chair until October 2024*
3. **Tiffany Releford** (Exp: 10/7/27), *Corresponding Secretary & Chair beginning November 2024*
4. **Nina Basu** (Exp: 4/4/25)
5. **Bianca Chang** (Exp: 3/1/25)
6. **Robert (Bob) Ford** (Exp: 3/6/26)
7. **Joan Hash** (Exp: 6/1/24)
8. **Jonan Hornum** (Exp: 3/1/24)
9. **Peter Hwang** (Exp: 3/21/24)
10. **Christiana Little** (Exp: 10/7/27)
11. **Scott Markow** (Exp: 3/6/26)
12. **Valerie Montague** (Exp: 7/29/27)
13. **Shannon Beasley-Taitt** (Exp: 7/29/27)
14. **Kui Zhao** (Exp: 3/1/25)
15. **Eneanya Obioha, Student Member** (Exp: 6/30/24)
16. **Sakshi Vineet Tirodkar, Student Member** (Exp: 6/30/25)

### CONTACT & FOR MORE INFORMATION

HRC@howardcountymd.gov

[www.howardcountymd.gov/OHRE-hrc](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/OHRE-hrc)

Presented annually, the Human Rights Commission Awards honor and celebrate individuals, organizations, and students who have made contributions toward advancing human and civil rights in Howard County. The 55th Human Rights Commission Awards Ceremony took place at the Owen Brown Interfaith Center on Tuesday, October 8, 2024.

### PROGRAM:

- Todd E. Givens, HRC Executive Secretary
- Angela Cabellon, Chief of Staff for Howard County Executive Dr. Calvin Ball
- HRC Chairperson, Lynda Earle
- Howard County State Senator Dr. Clarence Lam
- Howard County State Delegate Jessica Feldmark
- Gabriel A. Terrasa, HRC Commissioner

### STUDENT PERFORMERS:

- Atholton High School JROTC Color Guard
- Atholton High School Chamber Choir

### 2024 AWARD RECIPIENTS:

#### James E. Henson, Sr. & Jean W. Toomer Award:

*Dwanna Nicole, Executive Director of the Restorative Justice Partnership*

Dwanna Nicole is the Executive Director of the Restorative Justice Partnership, where she works within school communities throughout the country to assist them with developing strategies to create more positive school climates for students, educators, and families.

#### Dr. Murray Simon Student Award:

*Ishaan Busireddy, River Hill High School*

Ishaan Busireddy, a senior at River Hill High School, founded the nonprofit House4Sprouts during the pandemic to promote food self-sufficiency in Howard County. Over the past three and a half years, he has helped establish 12 gardens at Howard County schools.

#### Colette Roberts Organization Award:

*The Columbia (MD) Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. (CAC-DST)*

The Columbia (MD) Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. (CAC-DST), chartered in 1971, was the first African-American sorority in Howard County. As a non-profit organization, its mission is to support local communities globally through its Five-Point Programmatic Thrust: Educational Development, Economic Development, International Awareness, Political Involvement, and Physical and Mental Health.



# MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. HOLIDAY COMMISSION





Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As the Chair of the MLK Commission, I am deeply humbled to continue the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a man who dedicated his life to championing civil rights and equality. Our goal is to perpetuate his vision by fostering an environment of understanding, acceptance, and mutual respect in our communities. We believe in the power of dialogue and education to eradicate prejudice and build bridges of unity, embodying the timeless words of Dr. King, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Together, we can make a difference.

We are committed to honoring Dr. King's legacy through various initiatives and events throughout the year, including the annual MLK Day of Service where individuals come together to give back to their communities in the spirit of service and volunteerism. We also offer educational programs, workshops, and cultural events that celebrate diversity and promote social justice.

Our commission comprises of members from diverse backgrounds, representing different communities, organizations, and faiths. We believe that diversity is our strength and through collaboration, we can create a more just and equitable society.

As we mark the 56th anniversary of Dr. King's passing, it is a reminder that his message of love, peace, and equality still resonates today. We must continue to strive towards creating a world where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their race, religion, gender, or background. Let us come together and honor the legacy of Dr. King by embodying his principles in our daily lives and working towards a more just and inclusive society for all."

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Kurt Wall". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kurt Wall  
Chair, Howard County Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission

**The Howard County Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission (MLK) is a 17-member commission that was established by order of the Howard County Executive in 1985 to encourage and coordinate appropriate ceremonies and activities honoring the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Each year, the Howard County MLK Celebration takes place on the third Sunday of January. The Howard County Day of Service then takes place on the third Monday of January. The Day of Service provides a variety of service opportunities throughout the community that are representative of Dr. King's dedication to servant leadership.

The Commission also oversees the Martin Luther King, Jr. Pop-Up Pantry, a 2022 National Association of Counties (NACo) award-winning collaboration between the Howard County Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission (MLK Commission) under the Howard County Office of Human Rights and Equity (OHRE) and the Harriet Tubman Foundation of Howard County (HTF).

Identified as an official food distribution center of the Maryland Food Bank, the Pop-Up Pantry commenced in December of 2020 during the economically devastating Covid-19 Pandemic. The monthly Pop-Up Pantry exists to combat the problem of food insufficiency experienced by Howard County's most vulnerable residents. Since its inception, 30,200 families have received a monthly allotment of much-needed nutritious groceries.

### COMMISSIONERS

1. **Kurt W. Wall** (Exp: 3/6/25), *Chair*
2. **Hunter Craig** (Exp: 3/1/25), *Vice Chair*
3. **Teresa Garcia** (Exp: 3/1/27), *Corresponding Secretary*
4. **Dr. Abbie Diane Martin** (Exp: 3/1/27)
5. **Yetta Rogerson** (Exp: 3/1/24)
6. **Dr. Clarita Dawson** (Exp: 3/1/25)
7. **James Hollywood III** (Exp: 3/5/27)
8. **Tamerdis Hollywood III** (Exp: 7/1/27)
9. **Tina Horn** (Exp: 5/1/27)
10. **Kimberly McCauley** (Exp: 3/1/24)
11. **Daniel Nairn** (Exp: 4/4/25)
12. **Bonnie Sorak** (Exp: 3/1/25)
13. **Brett Vess** (Exp: 3/1/27)
14. **Maurice Frazier** (Exp: 2/1/25)
15. **Ishaan Busireddy, Student Commissioner** (Exp: 6/30/24)
16. **Tabitha Dixon, Student Commissioner** (Exp: 6/30/24)

### CONTACT & FOR MORE INFORMATION

MLK@howardcountymd.gov  
[www.howardcountymd.gov/OHRE-mlk](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/OHRE-mlk)

# 2024 MLK, JR. CELEBRATION

*"Commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a better person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in."*



**Sunday, January 14, 2024**

2024 marked the 54th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Celebration. The highlight of the event was an inspirational keynote address by Israah Ansari. Additionally, the Howard County Office of Human Rights and Equity honored departing commissioner Bert Hash with an award of appreciation for his four years of service, which included facilitating the MLK Pop-up Pantry that provides nourishing food to over 7,000 families each year.

**KEYNOTE:** Israah Ansari, recent Howard Community College Graduate

**FEATURED:**

- Dr. Calvin Ball, Howard County Executive
- Imam Amir Sheikh of Dar Al-Taqwa Islamic Center
- Yolanda F. Sonnier, OHRE Administrator
- Kurt Wall, MLK Chair

**STUDENTS FEATURED:** Master of Ceremonies: James Obasiolu of Atholton High School; Gabrielle Dougé of Glenelg High School sang the National Anthem, Howard County Honor Guard and Oratory presentations by Alani Jordan of Glenelg Country School and James Obasiolu.



# 2024 AWARD WINNERS

**LIVING THE DREAM AWARD:** This award recognizes individuals and organizations that promote the teachings and legacy of Dr. King through community involvement.

**INDIVIDUAL:** Bruce Leuthold

**ORGANIZATION:** Luminus Network for New Americans

**FOOD DRIVE COMPETITION:** In 2024, seven schools collectively raised 2,128 pounds of food, which was donated to the Howard County Food Bank.

**WINNER:** Reservoir High School, they are our first repeat winners raising a total of 1,023 pounds of food and baby supplies.

## HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS:

### 1ST PLACE

Sid Bajaj, 11th Grade, Glenelg Country School

### 2ND PLACE

Danielle Fonmedig, 9th Grade, Long Reach High School

### 3RD PLACE

Kallie Payne, 10th Grade, Reservoir High School

## MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS:

### 1ST PLACE

Jocara Knight, 8th Grade, Oakland Mills Middle School

### 2ND PLACE

Olanna Ezeji, 8th Grade, Mayfield Woods Middle School

### 3RD PLACE

Lena Porter, 8th Grade, Mayfield Woods Middle School

## MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT POSTER CONTEST WINNERS:



### 1ST PLACE

Crystal McGeehan  
8th Grade, Folly Quarter  
Middle School



### 2ND PLACE

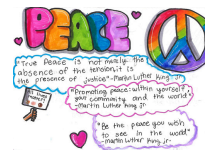
Neema Jones  
8th Grade, Elkridge  
Landing Middle School



### 3RD PLACE

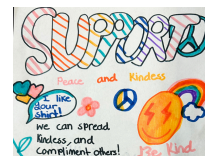
Liv Kaur  
6th Grade, Clarksville  
Middle School

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT POSTER CONTEST WINNERS:



### 1ST PLACE

Avery Richardson  
5th Grade, Fulton Elementary  
School



### 2ND PLACE

Jordan Knight  
5th Grade, Stevens Forest  
Elementary School



### 3RD PLACE

Monreaux West  
4th Grade, Gorman Crossing  
Elementary School

## HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ORATORY CONTEST WINNERS:

### 1ST PLACE

James Obasiolu, 11th Grade, Atholton High School

## MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT ORATORY CONTEST WINNER:

### 1ST PLACE

Alani Jordan, 7th Grade, Glenelg Middle School

**LGBTQIA+**  
**COMMISSION**



## A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSION CHAIR

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To the LGBTQIA+ Community and All Residents of Howard County,

As we reflect on 2024 and look ahead to 2025, I want to celebrate the Howard County LGBTQIA+ Commission's most impactful accomplishments this year. Through our collective efforts, we have made meaningful strides toward advancing equality, increasing visibility, and fostering inclusion for the LGBTQIA+ community in Howard County.

### 2024 Accomplishments

This year, we reached several important milestones:

- **Advocating for Statewide LGBTQIA+ Protections:** Supported key initiatives to prohibit book bans, protect LGBTQIA+ youth in crisis, update Maryland's Equal Pay for Equal Work Act, and advocate for transgender athletes in public schools.
- **Building Community Connections:** Organized and participated in events such as the Trans Day of Visibility, Progress Pride flag-raising, and OEC Pride, HoCo Pride, and Books in Bloom, fostering inclusivity throughout the county.
- **Supporting Intersectionality:** Participated in the AAPI Festival and co-hosted the inaugural Cultural Kaleidoscope event series, reinforcing our commitment to cross-cultural collaboration and inclusivity.
- **Engaging Youth and Elders:** Supported the HCPSS Pride Prom, hosted an LGBTeaQi&A+ event focusing on adolescent mental health, organized senior drag bingo, helped a Girl Scout troop earn their LGBTQ+ Pride Month Fun Patch, conducted an LGBTQIA+ 101 workshop at a local retirement community, and sponsored events like Chase Brexton's National Honor Our LGBT Elders Day and a community luncheon for LGBTQIA+ seniors.
- **Expanding Educational Outreach:** Hosted webinars on estate planning, raised awareness about the county's gender-neutral restroom law, and sponsored HopeWorks' Hope Bowl. For Trans Day of Remembrance, we organized a webinar on trans liberation and advocacy, uplifting trans and nonbinary voices and spotlighting Miss Maryland USA 2024, Bailey Anne Kennedy, the first openly trans woman to win that title.
- ...and so much more!

### Looking Ahead to 2025

As we prepare for next year, we recognize the potential challenges to LGBTQIA+ rights in a shifting federal landscape. The Commission remains steadfast in our commitment to advancing equality and inclusion. Our vision for the coming year includes:

- **Ensuring Inclusive Representation:** Advocating for the full spectrum of sexualities, romantic orientations, and gender identities.
- **Expanding Events:** Hosting dynamic programs and forging partnerships with organizations to broaden our impact.
- **Elevating Pride Month Celebrations:** Creating diverse activities and events that honor and uplift LGBTQIA+ contributions.
- **Strengthening Partnerships:** Deepening collaborations with county agencies and nonprofits to amplify resources and support.
- **Focusing on Public Policy:** Championing LGBTQIA+ priorities during the legislative session and addressing local issues.

Together, we've laid a strong foundation for the work ahead. Let's continue building on this momentum as we strive for an even more impactful 2025!

With gratitude and pride, on behalf of myself and my fellow commissioners,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian S. Bailey".

Brian S. Bailey  
Chair, Howard County LGBTQIA+ Commission

The Howard County LGBTQ+ Workgroup was established on November 1, 2019. County Executive Calvin Ball signed an Executive Order to create an LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer+) Workgroup to promote the shared community values of diversity and civility. The Workgroup partnered with county agencies, non-profit organizations, and other community groups to facilitate an environment of inclusion, communication, understanding, and respect throughout Howard County.

In October 2022, the County Executive and County Council voted to establish a permanent LGBTQIA+ Commission to continue the much-needed work of equity, inclusion, communication, understanding, and respect for all gender and sexual identities. The purpose of this Commission is to advance policy and systemic change for all persons who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Non-binary, and other capacities along the LGBTQIA+ spectrum. The Commission is comprised of a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 21 members who meet bi-monthly as of January 12, 2023.

#### COMMISSIONERS


1. **Brian Bailey (he/him)** (Exp: 11/6/26), *Chair*
2. **Becki Vivrette (she/her)** (Exp: 10/31/25), *Vice Chair beginning November 2024*
3. **Morgan Gingles (she/her)** (Rsg: 8/28/24), *Vice Chair until August 2024*
4. **Beck Rainbow Lynn Seckler (they/it)** (Exp: 11/6/26), *Corresponding Secretary*
5. **Grace Anastasiadis (she/her)** (Ex-Officio: Howard Community College)
6. **Ash Baker (they/them)** (Rsg: 8/28/24)
7. **Sue Bryant (she/her)** (Exp: 12/2/27)
8. **Danielle DuPuis (she/her)** (Ex-Officio: Howard County Public School System)
9. **Saad Facchine (he/him)**: (Rsg: 11/12/24)
10. **Bob Ford (he/him)**: (Exp: 10/31/25)
11. **Juls Gilliam (ze/zem)** (Rsg: 10/31/24)
12. **Robin Gillispie (she/her)** (Exp: 10/7/27)
13. **Chris Hefty (she/her) (Exp: 10/31/24)**
14. **Faye Liberatore (she/her)** (Exp: 10/31/25)
15. **Janeé M. Pelletier (she/her)** (Exp: 11/4/27)
16. **Thomas Zei (he/him)** (Exp: 2/5/27)
17. **Samantha Magness (she/her), Student Member** (Exp: 6/30/24)
18. **Saran Djimini Toure (she/they), Student Member** (Exp: 6/30/25)

#### CONTACT & FOR MORE INFORMATION

LGBTQIA@howardcountymd.gov

[www.howardcountymd.gov/boards-commissions/lgbtqia-commission](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/boards-commissions/lgbtqia-commission)



A photograph of three individuals at an event. On the left, a person with short blonde hair and glasses, wearing a black blazer over a black top with a white grid pattern, stands with their hand on a chair. In the center, a person wearing a patterned headscarf, glasses, and a blue denim jacket holds a microphone and speaks. On the right, a man in a blue baseball cap, a light blue blazer over a checkered shirt, and a blue pin on his lapel stands with his hands in his pockets. The background is slightly blurred, showing an indoor setting with a framed picture on the wall.

On Sunday, March 31st, the LGBTQIA+ Commission held a celebration in honor of Transgender Day of Visibility at Busboys & Poets Columbia location. The Sunday afternoon program featured performances from local trans and gender nonconforming artists emceed by Commissioner Ash Baker. This was the first in-person celebration the Commission has organized honoring trans persons in Howard County





### Drag BINGO June 7, 2024

Developed in partnership between the OHRE, LGBTQIA+ Commission, and the Office on Aging & Independence, this event brought some amazing drag performances to the Bain 50+ Center for a Pride Month bingo event! Featuring performers Tara Hoot and Sebastian Katz, the day was a celebration of joy and community.

### Cultural Kaleidoscopes June 6, 2024

Developed in partnership between OHRE, the LGBTQIA+ Commission, and the AAPI Commission, the first ever Cultural Kaleidoscopes focused on exploring the intersection of AAPI and LGBTQIA+ experiences. Community members viewed a screening of Patrick G Lee's 'Unspoken', participated in a dialogue focused on racism in the LGBTQIA+ community and homophobia in the AAPI community, and enjoyed a performance from AAPI performer Bombalicious Eklaver.



## COMMUNITY EDUCATION

- Estate Planning for the LGBTQIA+ Community Webinar
- Gender Neutral Restrooms Webinar
- Building an LGBTQIA+ Holiday Toolkit Webinar
- Residences at Vantage Point LGBTQIA+ Dessert and Learn
- Trans Day of Remembrance 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Webinar
- LGBTQIA+ Girl Scout Information Session

## OUTREACH

- Hopeworks HopeBowl 2024
- Interview with R. Eric Thomas at Books and Bloom 2024
- Old Ellicott City Pride 2024
- Chase Brexton's National Honor our LGBT Elders Day
- Chase Brexton's Community Connections-Pride Through the Years Luncheon
- HoCo Pride 2024
- Howard County AAPI Festival
- HCPSS Pride Prom
- HCPSS LGBTeaQI&A

# LA ALIANZA LATINA COMMISSION



Dear Friends,

Greetings from La Alianza Latina Commission!

As 2024 comes to an end, we are proud of the accomplishments of our second year as a commission representing the Latino community in Howard County.

We began 2024 defining our mission and vision statements:

- To unite and elevate the voices of Latinos in Howard County through advocacy, legislation, inclusive policies, and partnerships to ensure every individual's potential is realized.
- To advance the highest quality of life for the Latino community in Howard County.

We also established the La Alianza Latina Commission will stand for: community empowerment, cultural integrity, equity and justice, collaborative leadership and innovative advocacy.

We partner with Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) and supported two events for the families and students:

- Noche Latina at Glenelg High School
- Resource Fair at Deep Run Elementary School

We purchased the construction of a Free Library and donated bilingual books for Talbott Springs Elementary School and participated in the Read Aloud event at the school during Hispanic Heritage Month.

Once again we partnered with Columbia Association bringing to the Howard County community, Latin Dance Night, to kick off Hispanic Heritage Month.

This year our signature event, the Hispanic Heritage Festival was held at Color Burst Park where we partnered with Merriweather Arts and Culture to bring to the community a sample of the richness and diversity of our culture. The event was an intimate, well attended celebration of our Latino community.

I owe a ton of gratitude to the Vice Chair, Luzmila Robinson, without her leadership and countless contributions, the success of this year would not have been possible.

Thank you to Yolanda Vazquez, Corresponding Secretary for taking the lead in the preparation of the 2024 Annual Report.

I also want to thank Monica Perez Mills from the Office of The County Executive, Petra Guiland and Yolanda Sonnier from the Office of Human Rights and Equity for their support and guidance. None of the accomplishments of this year would have been possible without their dedicated commitment to our success.

It has been a true honor to serve as chair of La Alianza Latina Commission during 2024. I look forward to a more successful and impactful 2025 under the new leadership.

Humbly serving my community,

*Yvette Oquendo-Berruz*

Dr. Yvette Oquendo-Berruz  
Chair, Howard County La Alianza Latina Commission

Beginning as a workgroup during Hispanic Heritage Month in September of 2020, the County Executive and the County Council voted to establish La Alianza Latina Commission as a permanent commission in order to continue the work of advancing policy and systemic change for the uplift of Latino families, businesses, and residents in October 2022.

The goals of the commission are to promote diversity and civility and address many of the concerns and struggles that the Latino and immigrant communities experience. The commission is comprised of 17 Howard County residents, representing a variety of backgrounds throughout Central and South America. La Alianza Latina aims to assist constituents and educate them on certain services and programs that may seem out of reach – such as accessing community resources, starting a business, or purchasing a home.

### COMMISSIONERS

1. **Dr. Yvette Oquendo** (Exp: 10/31/25), *Chair*
2. **Luzmila Robinson** (Exp: 10/31/25), *Vice Chair*
3. **Yolanda Vazquez** (Exp: 12/4/26), *Corresponding Secretary*
4. **Alicia Altamirano** (Exp: 10/31/24)
5. **Katherine Canales** (Exp: 10/31/24)
6. **Sheila Alvelo** (Ex-Officio: Howard Community College)
7. **Danielle Baron** (Exp: 10/31/25)
8. **Victoria Benitez** (Exp: 6/20/24)
9. **Santiago Carrera** (Exp: 10/31/24)
10. **Daniela Flores** (Exp: 11/6/26)
11. **Gaston Gamez** (Ex-Officio: Howard County Public School System)
12. **Paloma León** (Exp: 10/31/24)
13. **Elvira Domínguez McCullough** (Exp: 12/4/26)
14. **Gabriel Moreno** (Exp: 10/31/24)
15. **Cris Oviedo** (10/31/25)
16. **Maricarmen Perez-Sarabia** (6/30/25)
17. **Andrea Rizkallah** (10/7/27)
18. **Felicita Sola-Carter** (Exp: 10/31/25)
19. **Gabriel Terrasa** (Exp: 10/31/24)

### CONTACT & FOR MORE INFORMATION

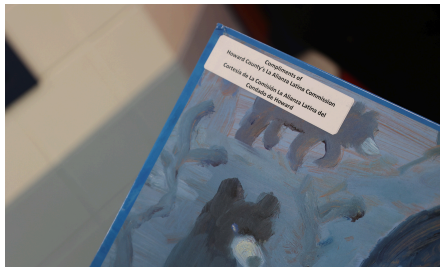
alianzalatina@howardcountymd.gov  
[www.howardcountymd.gov/boards-commissions/la-alianza-latina-commission](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/boards-commissions/la-alianza-latina-commission)



On Saturday, October 5, the La Alianza Latina Commission, in partnership with County Executive Calvin Ball and Merriweather Arts and Culture, hosted the Howard County Hispanic Heritage Festival. The festival showcased the rich diversity of Hispanic heritage through live performances, art displays, and delicious cuisine.



## LA ALIANZA LATINA COMMISSION HIGHLIGHTS (CONT.)



### Talbott Springs Book Donation August 2, 2024

La Alianza Latina Commissioners presented a set of new bilingual books to Principle Leslie Harmon and Assistant Principal Derek Lewis of Talbott Springs Elementary School for inclusion in the school's Little Free Library. The Commissioners were given a tour of the school's amazing facilities, and reaffirmed their commitment to continue to work together in partnership to support Howard County's Latin population.



### Latin Dance Night September 21, 2024

In partnership with the Columbia Association, the La Alianza Latina Commission hosted the second annual Latin Dance Night at the Downtown Columbia Lakefront. This vibrant event brought together over 1,000 community members to celebrate Latin culture through music, dance, and food.



### Hispanic Heritage Month Resource Fair October 9, 2024

La Alianza Latina Commissioners conducted community outreach at the Deep Run Elementary School Hispanic Heritage Month Resource Fair. The fair provided essential resources to families, including 65 flu shots administered by the Department of Health and over 50 bags of fruits and vegetables distributed by the Community Food Bank. Additionally, a raffle activity offered 20 donation items as giveaways, dinner was provided for 200 families, and Luminus distributed free computers to low-income families.

# ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMISSION

## A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSION CHAIR

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Dear Friends,

As we reflect on 2024, it has been an extraordinary year for the Howard County Asian American and Pacific Islander Commission. I am deeply proud of all that we have achieved together, working to create a community where AAPI residents feel seen, valued, and heard.

One of the highlights of the year was the resounding success of Howard County's 3rd Annual AAPI Festival, which attracted over 6,000 passionate attendees. The festival featured five hours of dynamic programming, with more than 350 performers from 26 groups representing 14 distinct cultures. Visitors enjoyed 40 interactive booths, 15 food trucks offering authentic Asian cuisine, and 50 exhibition tables showcasing local businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. This event not only celebrated the vibrant cultural heritage of the AAPI community but also reinforced our ongoing mission to challenge stereotypes and promote understanding and unity.

In addition to the festival, we were proud to host our inaugural AAPI Business Summit. The Summit was a significant milestone in our efforts to foster an inclusive environment for AAPI entrepreneurs in Howard County. With inspiring speeches from Lt. Governor Aruna Miller, keynote speaker Jimmy Rhee, and other distinguished panelists from the AAPI business and government sectors, the Summit highlighted the invaluable contributions of AAPI businesses. It also provided participants with the tools, resources, and networks necessary to advance their entrepreneurial endeavors.

Another key initiative was the continued planning and development of the first-ever Howard County AAPI Cultural Center. We are excited about the upcoming grand opening of the Center in the summer of 2025, which will serve as a vital hub for the AAPI community and help better address the needs of residents.

Throughout the year, our Commission also engaged in meaningful outreach and partnership efforts. From co-hosting an event with the LGBTQIA+ Commission to participating in the Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration, we strengthened our relationships across communities and reaffirmed our commitment to inclusivity.

Additionally, we held a Commission retreat, where we reflected on our past achievements and developed strategic goals for the year ahead. In these discussions, we identified key values that guide our work: integrity, relationships, and equity. With a new leadership team in place, I am more confident than ever in our ability to build upon our successes and continue moving forward with purpose.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our commissioners, the unwavering support of County Executive Calvin Ball and the Office of Human Rights and Equity, and the engagement of the community. Together, we have made great strides, and we look forward to continuing this vital work in 2025 and beyond.

Sincerely,

*Lanlan Xu*

Lanlan Xu  
Chair, Howard County AAPI Commission

The Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Workgroup was established by the County Executive in February 2021 to evaluate the needs of the AAPI community. CB74-2022, the act to establish the AAPI Commission, was approved and signed on November 9, 2022 by the County Executive, becoming effective January 2023.

Consisting of 24 members, the AAPI Commission hosts public bi-monthly meetings, advises the Howard County Executive on policy initiatives, and advocates for issues that impact the AAPI community. The Commission also organizes community cultural events and conducts informative discussions on emerging issues. Through its programming and outreach, it is the Commission's hope that they can foster deeper relationships between the Commission itself and the Howard County AAPI community at large. The Commission is dedicated to cultivating a safe and welcoming community where AAPI residents can feel seen, valued, and heard.


### COMMISSIONERS

1. **Lanlan Xu, Ph.D.** (Exp: 3/6/26), *Chair*
2. **Dhaval Shah** (Exp: 3/6/26), *Vice Chair until August 2024*
3. **Dr. Razia F. Kosi** (Ex-officio for Howard County Public School System), *Vice Chair beginning September 2024*
4. **Ashton Bui, Student Commissioner** (Exp: 6/30/26), *Corresponding Secretary*
5. **Sameer C. Ahirrao** (Exp: 3/6/26)
6. **Misako Aoki** (Exp: 3/6/25)
7. **Jin "JC" Chung** (Exp: 3/4/27)
8. **Naresh C. Das, Ph.D.** (Exp: 3/6/25)
9. **Kimberly Eggborn** (Exp: 3/6/26)
10. **Sanjeev Gholap** (Exp: 3/4/27)
11. **Sanjay George** (Exp: 3/6/25)
12. **Tomoko Hoogenboom, Ph.D.** (Exp: 3/6/26)
13. **Diane Li** (Ex-officio for Howard County Library System)
14. **Saffiyah Gonzales Madraswala** (Exp: 3/4/27)
15. **Khin Rupa Waddy Maung, M.D.** (Exp: 3/6/26)
16. **Madiha Rahimi** (Exp: 3/4/27)
17. **Dhaval Shah** (Exp: 3/6/26)
18. **Young Ran Smith** (Exp: 3/6/26)
19. **May-Fong Tsay** (Exp: 3/6/26)
20. **Jodie Wang** (Exp: 3/6/26)
21. **Helen Won** (Exp: 3/6/26)
22. **Dr. Yang Yu** (Ex-officio for Howard Community College)
23. **Kui Zhao** (Exp: 5/6/27)
24. **Koko Aiolutotea** (Exp: 3/6/24)
25. **Lily Peng, Student Commissioner** (Exp: 6/30/24)

### CONTACT & FOR MORE INFORMATION

AAPI@howardcountymd.gov  
<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/boards-commissions/AAPI>





On Saturday, May 11, the AAPI Commission, in partnership with County Executive Calvin Ball and the Inner Arbor Trust, hosted the 3rd annual AAPI Festival, celebrating the vibrant cultures, traditions, and contributions of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community in Howard County and beyond.





### **AAPI Business Summit September 24, 2024**

The AAPI Commission hosted their very first Asian American & Pacific Islander Business Summit at the Maryland Innovation Center. The AAPI community represents more than 22% of our population, and Howard County is home to unique businesses that contribute to the economic and cultural fabric of the community. This event brought together nearly 60 AAPI business owners, community leaders, and key stakeholders to strengthen networks and foster growth.

### 1 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Human Rights Commission meets monthly on the 3rd Thursday of each month, with the exception of August.

**Meeting Time:** 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM

**Format:** Hybrid, unless otherwise noted.

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### 2 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. HOLIDAY COMMISSION

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission meets monthly on the 1st Wednesday of each month, with the exception of July.

**Meeting Time:** 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM

**Format:** Hybrid, unless otherwise noted.

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### 3 LA ALIANZA LATINA COMMISSION

The La Alianza Latina Commission meets bi-monthly on the 3rd Tuesday of these months: January, March, May, July, September, November.

**Meeting Time:** 6:15 PM to 8:15 PM

**Format:** Hybrid, unless otherwise noted.

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### 4 LGBTQIA+ COMMISSION

The LGBTQIA+ Commission meets bi-monthly on the 2nd Thursday of these months: January, March, May, July, September, November.

**Meeting Time:** 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM

**Format:** In-person, unless otherwise noted.

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### 5 ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER (AAPI) COMMISSION

The AAPI Commission meets bi-monthly on the 2nd Tuesday of these months: February, April, June, August, October, December.

**Meeting Time:** 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM

**Format:** Hybrid, unless otherwise noted.

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## OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUITY

Discrimination is illegal in Howard County, Maryland.  
Howard County Law prohibits discrimination in the following areas: Employment, Housing, Public Accommodations, Finance, and Law Enforcement.



### Protecting Your Identity

Race, Creed, Color, National Origin, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Immigration and Citizenship Status



### Protecting Your Person

Age, Physical or Mental Disability, Personal Appearance, Sex.



### Protecting Your Family & Finances

Marital Status, Familial Status, Occupation, Source of Income.



### Protecting Your Worldview

Religion and/or Political Opinion.

## HOWARD COUNTY PROTECTS THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALL

The Office of Human Rights and Equity is an entity of the Howard County Government that seeks to eradicate discrimination, increase equal opportunity, and protect and promote human rights and equity for all residents of Howard County.



# Howard County

Office of Human Rights & Equity



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Fax: (410) 313-6468



Email: [OHRE@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:OHRE@howardcountymd.gov)



Website: [www.howardcountymd.gov/OHRE](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/OHRE)



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