

2025

HOWARD COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUITY

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

EVERYONE DESERVES TO LIVE FREE OF DISCRIMINATION

The Howard County Office of Human Rights & 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 & Equity (OHRE) was established in 1975 and is governed by 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 2025 Annual Report for the Office of Human Rights & Equity is an essential overview of the status of civil and human rights in Howard County.

OHRE Administrator LaKeisha McClendon





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 and Community Members,

As we reflect back upon 2025, 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.

In this comprehensive report, you'll find a broad range of data and information detailing the educational, outreach, and investigative actions of OHRE. As outlined in our Howard County Human Rights Code, OHRE is responsible for the administration and enforcement of human rights laws, conduct investigations, and process and resolve complaints of unlawful discrimination in areas of employment, housing, public accommodations, financing, and law enforcement. This past year, OHRE fulfilled this mission through its high-quality education and outreach efforts, countywide events celebrating our county's rich cultural diversity, and management of several commissions, workgroups, and other community initiatives.



As we witnessed this past year, the work of eradicating exclusion, bigotry, and discrimination in a shifting national and global landscape remains both challenging and complex. Despite our best and most determined efforts, the impact of hate cannot be understated, and we must always remain diligent in our response – and on every occasion, OHRE has done just that. Its staff remains steadfast in their efforts to create a more inclusive and welcoming workforce within Howard County Government, expanding and strengthening relationships with community partners, and making it known, **hate has no place in Howard County.**

This work would of course not be possible without the contribution of leaders within our community, and I would like to thank all our commissioners who volunteer their time and effort to provide service and programming to ensure Howard County is an inclusive place for all. In fact, in this report you will also find write-ups for the County's Human Rights, Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday, La Alianza Latina, LGBTQIA+, and Asian American and Pacific Islander commissions.

To our OHRE Administrator LaKeisha McClendon and her staff, thank you for your continued dedication, professionalism, and service to our community. As this 2025 report highlights, through your work and service, you continue to ensure Howard County is an inclusive and welcoming place for all.

Sincerely,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATION
3430 Courthouse Drive • Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 • 410-313-3932

Brandee Ganz, Chief Administrative Officer
bganz@howardcountymd.gov

Dear Friends,

Through the hard work of our Office of Human Rights & Equity (OHRE), we are ensuring that Howard County continues to fulfill its promise as a place where all can feel safe, celebrated, and respected. I am excited to present our OHRE 2025 Annual Report.



Throughout the year, OHRE does the important work of investigating cases of discrimination in the workplace, housing, public accommodations, financing, and law enforcement. In 2025, the OHRE's Investigations Unit continued to receive cases of discrimination across employment, housing, public accommodations, and financing, with race (24 percent), disability (23 percent), and sex (15 percent) remaining priority areas of focus. Age, national origin, sexual orientation, color, and source of income were also represented, indicating the need for continued efforts to address discrimination and inequity across the county.

In addition to the critical work of the Investigations Unit, 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.

Despite the tireless work of this office, Howard County has not been untouched by the national trend of rising hate. In 2025, there were 49 reports of Hate Bias Incidents (HBIs) here in our county. With a prevalence of anti-Black (42 percent), anti-Jewish (14 percent), and anti-Hispanic or Latino (12 percent) HBIs, it is clear that additional strategies to ensure the safety and sense of belonging for all our Howard County neighbors need to be implemented. Unfortunately as we see too often, hate crimes and HBIs often go 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, please contact police to make a report.

With 2026 underway, I would like to thank OHRE Administrator LaKeisha McClendon and her staff for all that you do to keep Howard County a welcoming, safe, and inclusive for all.

Sincerely,

Brandee Ganz
Chief Administrative Officer



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUITY

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

Calvin Ball, County Executive, • Brandee Ganz, Chief Administrative Officer

LaKeisha McClendon, Administrator

Dear Howard County Residents:

As I reflect on my first year serving as Administrator of the Office of Human Rights & Equity (OHRE), I am proud to share our 2025 Annual Report.

First, I want to recognize the strong foundation built by our previous Administrator and to thank the OHRE staff for their professionalism, compassion, and steady commitment to the people we serve. In 2025, our team continued the essential work of responding to human rights concerns while also strengthening our public education and outreach so residents can better understand their rights, access support, and feel seen in County spaces.



This year also required OHRE to lead through transition and respond to uncertainty with steadiness and purpose. We experienced shifting priorities, time-sensitive community needs, and moments that required rapid coordination and clear communication. While navigating internal change, we worked to maintain continuity in services and remain grounded in the expectation that residents deserve consistency, responsiveness, and care, even when conditions are complex.

Throughout the year, OHRE expanded our community presence through public events and partnerships that reflect Howard County's diversity and our office's priorities. We supported civic connection and cultural belonging through engagements such as MLK Day of Service, Juneteenth, Transgender Day of Visibility, the AAPI Festival, Hispanic Heritage Festival, and Kwanzaa, among others. We also focused on equity in action by participating in efforts like the County's expungement clinics and community outreach opportunities that help residents connect to resources and local leaders.

2025 reaffirmed that our mission is both urgent and ongoing. Discrimination does not pause, and neither can our work. Moving forward, OHRE will continue strengthening education, deepening relationships across communities, and translating equity commitments into practical actions that residents can feel.

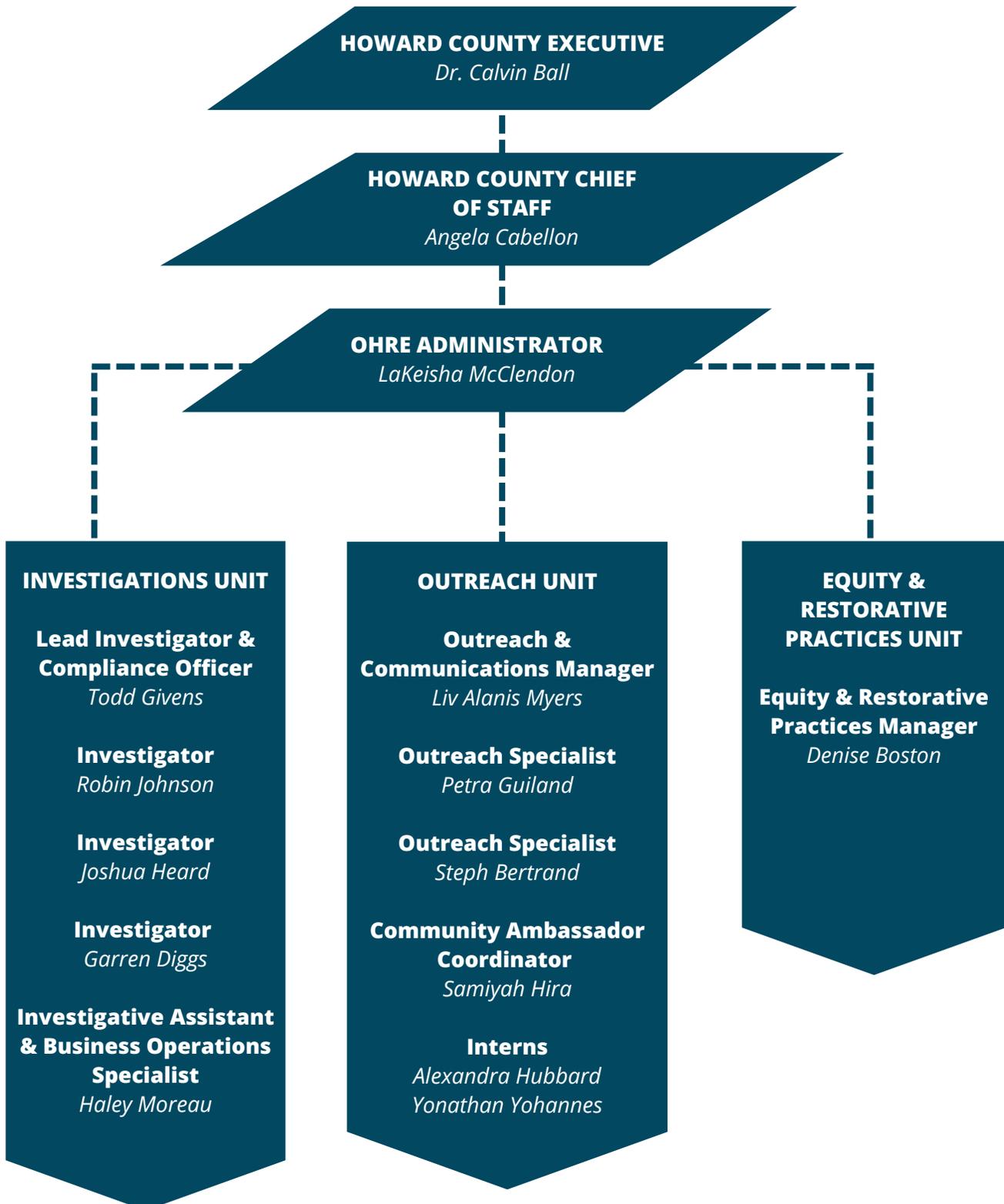
It is a privilege to lead OHRE at this moment. I am grateful for County Executive Calvin Ball and his team for their continued support of OHRE's mission, and I extend my appreciation to the Commissioners, community groups, educators, advocates, and partners who invested their time and expertise alongside us. Most importantly, I thank the residents of Howard County who have trusted us with their experiences and expectations. Your voices guide our work, and your partnership strengthens it.

In gratitude and service,

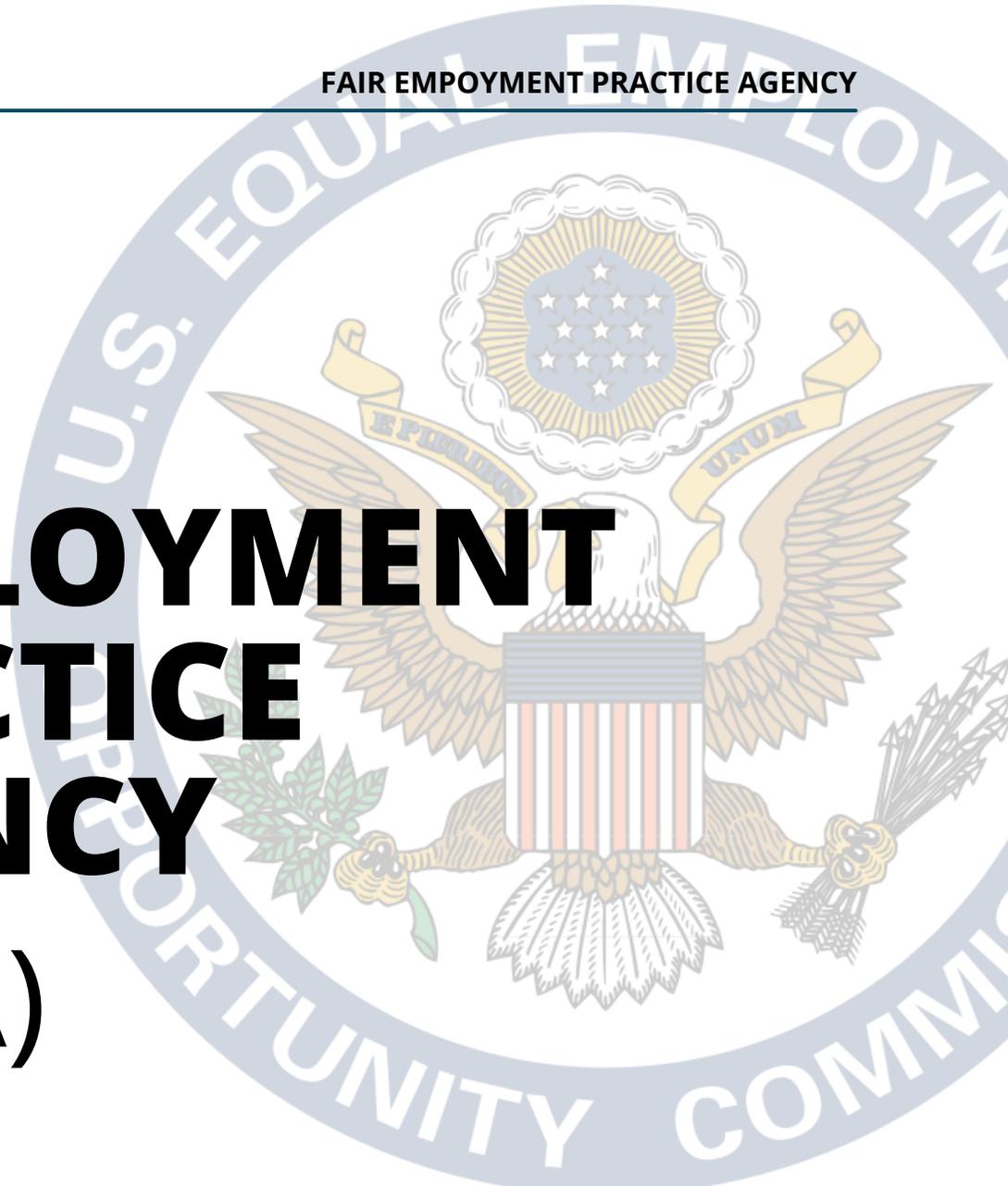
LaKeisha McClendon

Administrator, Office of Human Rights & Equity

STAFF MEMBERS & ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



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.

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



Garren Diggs
(he/him)
Investigator



Haley Moreau
(she/her)
Investigative Assistant
& Business Operations
Specialist

HOWARD COUNTY CODE: SUBTITLE 2, SECTION 12.200-12.221

RACE 	COLOR 	CREED 	NATIONAL ORIGIN 
GENDER IDENTITY & EXPRESSION 	AGE 	DISABILITY 	SEXUAL ORIENTATION 
SEX 	MARITAL STATUS 	FAMILIAL STATUS 	PERSONAL APPEARANCE 
RELIGION 	POLITICAL OPINION 	SOURCE OF INCOME 	OCCUPATION 
CITIZENSHIP IMMIGRATION STATUS 	<p>Protected Classes are groups of people with a common trait that is protected by law.</p> <p>OHRE also investigates complaints of retaliation for participating in protected activities.</p>		

KEY TERMS

Discrimination means acting or failing to act or unduly delaying any action regarding any person because of race, sex, creed, religion, national origin, color, age, occupation, personal appearance, political opinion, sexual orientation, marital status, physical or mental disability, familial status, source of income or gender identity in such a way that such persons are adversely affected in housing, employment, financing, law enforcement, or public accommodations.

Retaliation; Protection against retaliation means an agency may not fire, demote, harass or otherwise take adverse action against an employee or applicant for employment for filing a charge of discrimination, participating in a discrimination proceeding, or otherwise opposing discrimination.

Protected Activities; An individual engages in protected activity when they: (1) oppose a practice they consider to be discriminatory; (2) participate in an employment discrimination proceeding; or (3) engage in other protected activity such as requests for an accommodation based on disability, religion or a pregnancy-related medical condition.

Complainant(s) refers to the individual or group who files a charge of discrimination.

Mediation is a method of resolving the dispute without the time and expense of an investigation. OHRE will ask if you would like to mediate the matter with a trained mediator at OHRE. Both parties must agree to mediate.

Finding is the determination made by the Investigations Team. Charges of discrimination will either be determined to have Reasonable Cause or No Reasonable Cause.

Conciliation; If OHRE issued a Reasonable Cause finding, the Administrator will contact the parties to attempt to arrange a settlement before it is sent to the Human Rights Commission for a public hearing.

Appeals Process; If OHRE issued a finding of No Reasonable Cause the Complainant may appeal the finding to the Human Rights Commission. The appeal must be filed within 20 days of the date that the Finding was issued. Appeals must be in writing and sent to The Human Rights Commission by email or mailed to HRC at 9820 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 237, Columbia, MD 21046.

Public Hearing; The Human Rights Commission will hold public hearings on a granted appeal or a Reasonable Cause finding that does not settle. The Complainant must present all evidence of the alleged discrimination and damages. Any party to the proceedings may appeal the decision and order of the HRC to the Circuit Court of Howard County within thirty (30) days.

Alternative Action; The Complainant can file their case in the Circuit Court for Howard County after forty-five (45) days of filing a complaint in the OHRE. In an employment case, the Complainant may also request a Right to Sue letter from EEOC ninety (90) days after the complaint has been filed with OHRE. If the Complainant chooses either of these options, the complaint in OHRE will be closed.

CHARGE OF DISCRIMINATION & COMPLAINT PROCESS

HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT

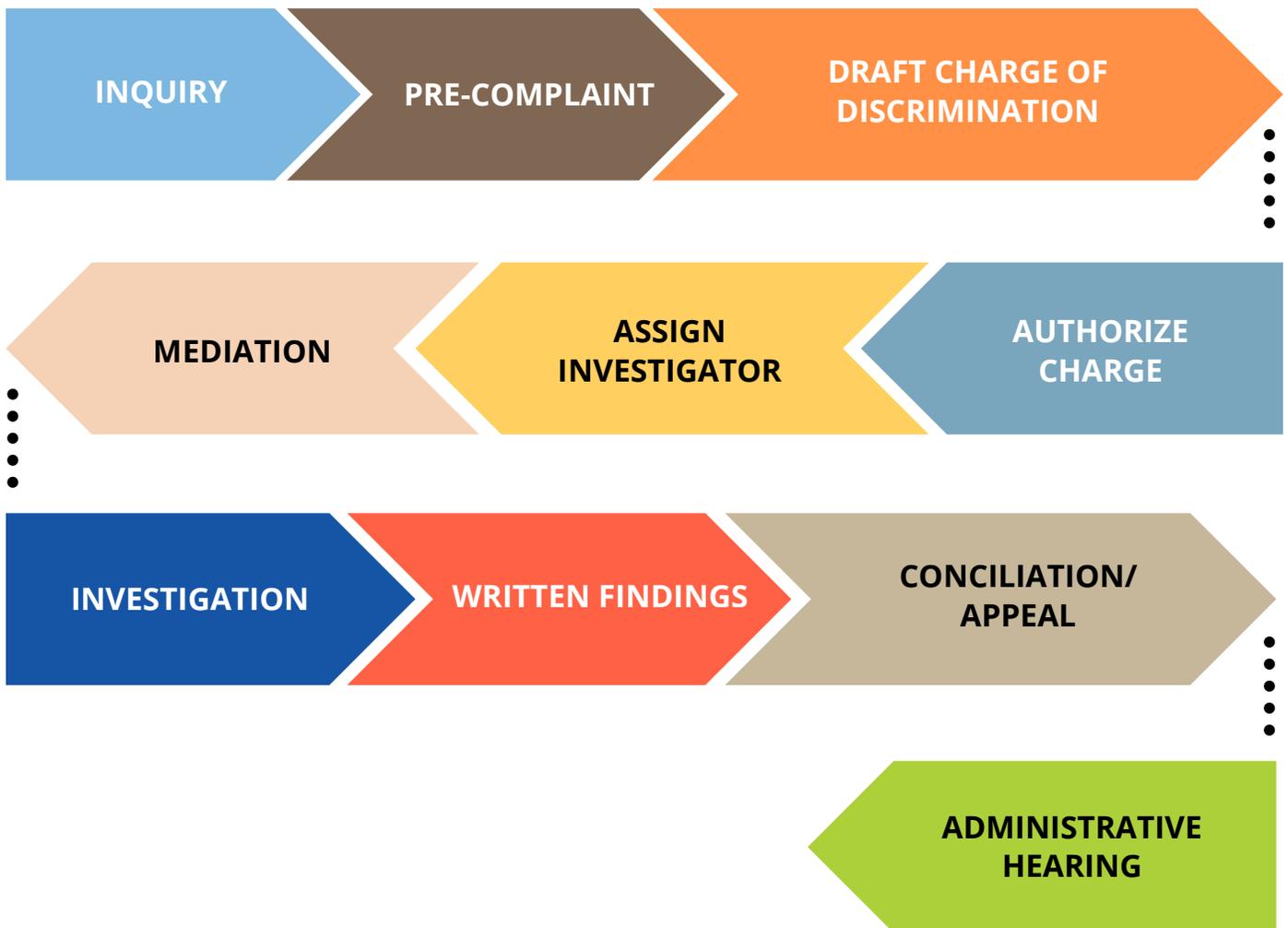
If you feel that you have been unlawfully discriminated against, you should contact the OHRE by:

- 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



20 CASELOAD 25 ANALYSIS

This caseload analysis is broken down into the following sections:

- Cases by Basis
- Monetary Awards

66 FILED CASES

53 EMPLOYMENT	11 HOUSING	2 PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS
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64 CLOSED CASES

55 EMPLOYMENT	5 HOUSING	4 PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS
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20 CASES BY 25 BASIS

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



MONETARY SETTLEMENT AWARDS

Monetary settlement awards in 2025 totaled \$220,274, despite a ten-year low in EEOC litigation activity which marked the first six months of the year.

MONTH	2022	2023	2024	2025
January		\$37,000	\$17,360	\$12,000
February			\$5,000	\$26,750
March	\$10,000		\$2,500	\$5,000
April	\$50,000		\$55,500	\$30,000
May			\$5,000	\$6,140
June	\$73,500	\$1,500	\$4,360	\$6,000
July		\$20,000	\$9,500	\$15,000
August			\$121,000	\$15,000
September		\$15,350	\$3,000	\$69,500
October	\$9,500	\$20,000	\$89,000	\$25,000
November	\$72,500	\$68,000		\$5,000
December		\$5,000		\$4,884
TOTAL	\$215,500	\$166,850	\$312,220	\$220,274

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

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

53 HATE BIAS INCIDENT REPORTS IN 2025

THIS REPORT ACCOUNTS FOR HBIS REPORTED BY DECEMBER 31, 2025

TOP 3 BIAS MOTIVATION CATEGORIES

79%

RACE, ETHNICITY,
AND/OR ANCESTRY

13%

RELIGION

8%

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

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

45%

ANTI-BLACK OR
AFRICAN AMERICAN

13%

ANTI-JEWISH

11%

ANTI-HISPANIC OR
LATINO

9%

ANTI-ASIAN



COMMUNITY OUTREACH UNIT

The Outreach Unit Supports the mission of the Office of Human Rights & Equity (OHRE) by developing and implementing strategies and activities (including outreach initiatives, events, education, communications, and programming) to address and combat discrimination, enhance equitable outcomes for diverse community groups, and protect and promote human rights in Howard County.

WHAT WE DO

- Conduct **outreach to the community** for all activities relating to the mission and purpose of the Office of Human Rights & Equity
- Produce **free community events** celebrating the identities and cultures that comprise the Howard County community
- Partner in the creation of **in outreach activities and events** with other 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 workshops** to government agencies, organizations, and community members around equity, intercultural engagement, and human rights
- Develop and implement **strategic community outreach** efforts to engage diverse communities, neighborhoods, and residents of Howard County
- Lead the direction of **communications**, including marketing, social media content and engagement, multimedia and graphic design, newsletters, etc. for OHRE
- Evaluate **community needs** and demographic, social, and programmatic trends using a variety of research methods to gather the necessary data for the OHRE to provide relevant programming
- 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/them)
Outreach &
Communications Manager



Petra Guiland
(she/her)
Outreach Specialist



Stephane Bertrand
(he/him)
Outreach Specialist



Samiyah Hira
(she/her)
Community Ambassador
Coordinator



Yonathan Yohannes
(he/him)
Intern



Alex Hubbard
(she/her)
Intern

4,500+

ATTENDEES AT
OHRE EVENTS

42

PUBLIC
COMMISSION
MEETINGS

59

HOSTED OR
PARTNERED
EVENTS

39

TRAININGS
&
WORKSHOPS

52

ATTENDED
EVENTS

125+

COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIPS



OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS



Juneteenth June 19, 2025

Howard County Executive Calvin Ball, OHRE, the Harriet Tubman Cultural Center, and the Department of Recreation and Parks partnered to host a day of community, connection, and joy. This Juneteenth observance honored the history and impact of the holiday through live music, a community yard sale, and interactive woodworking with Van Buren Wood Works. From line dancing classes to local resource exploration, the event successfully brought neighbors together to celebrate the importance of Juneteenth.

Caribbean American Heritage Month Celebration June 28, 2025

The fourth annual Caribbean American Heritage Month Celebration, hosted by OHRE and County Executive Calvin Ball, brought the vibrant spirit of the islands to Howard County. Over 1,500 attendees enjoyed an immersive experience featuring traditional games, live music, and interactive dance classes. The family-friendly event showcased the region's rich culture through diverse vendors, children's activities, and authentic Caribbean cuisine.



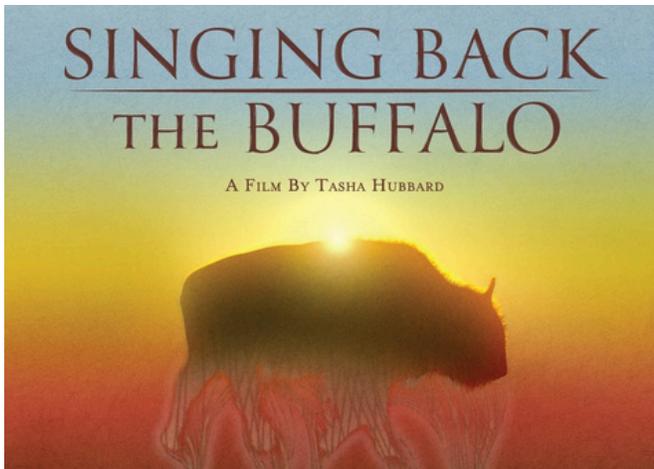
Women's Equality Day August 28, 2025

OHRE held its fourth annual Women's Equality Day Celebration at the East Columbia 50+ Center. Nearly 100 women and allies gathered to strengthen community bonds and reaffirm their shared commitment to a future of true gender equality. The program featured a rhythmic healing session by Drum Dr. Dot and an empowering group sing led by Megan Cary, all leading up to a powerful spoken-word finale by Dr. Rebecca Dupas.

Hate Has No Place September 15, 2025

The Howard County Human Rights Commission and the OHRE partnered to host a public forum focused on hate crimes and hate bias incidents (HBIs). The event served as a vital platform for residents to engage directly with the Howard County Police Department's (HCPD) Community Outreach Team. Attendees gained insight into law enforcement's investigative processes and participated in a candid dialogue regarding the current climate of hate within the county.





Native American Heritage Month Celebration November 17, 2025

In honor of Native American Heritage Month, OHRE hosted a screening of the documentary *Singing Back the Buffalo* to amplify Indigenous voices. Directed by award-winning Cree filmmaker Tasha Hubbard, the film followed Indigenous visionaries working to rematriate buffalo to the Great Plains. The event provided a moving exploration of Indigenous leadership and environmental justice, highlighting the transformative power of a restored relationship with the land.

Annual Kwanzaa Celebration December 27, 2025

More than 300 community members joined OHRE for a vibrant, family-oriented, festive celebration at the Harriet Tubman Cultural Center. The 2025 celebration was an unforgettable experience filled with live performances, inspirational speakers, and family-friendly enrichment activities focusing on the seven Principles of Kwanzaa. Friends, family, and the community joined together to reflect, celebrate, and build unity within the spirit of Kwanzaa.



COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING TOPICS (SELECTED)

- Bystander Intervention & Cultural Awareness (BICA)
- International Holocaust Remembrance Day Workshop
- Beyond the Social and Medical Model: a Human Rights Perspective on Disability
- Confronting Racial Realities of Human Trafficking
- The Art of Activism
- Speak Up, Stand Out: LGBTQIA+ Advocacy in Action
- Improving Communication through Cultural Intelligence
- How Culture Informs Our Perspective
- How to Become a Leader for Human Rights and Social Change
- CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) Training

OUTREACH EVENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS (SELECTED)

- Long Reach High School Black History Expo
- Women's History Month Brunch
- Reimagine the Rainbow Unconference with HCPSS Pride
- River Hill's 2025 Spring Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Conference
- Human Trafficking and the Deaf Community Town Hall
- Old Ellicott City (OEC) Pride
- Legacy Leadership with HCPSS Pride
- Harriet Tubman Day with the Harriet Tubman Cultural Center
- Naturalmente Latino with Howard County Recreation and Parks
- Howard County Public School System's (HCPSS) Hispanic Heritage Month Resources Fair at Deep Run Elementary School
- HoCo Pride
- Frybread Fest
- Kwanzaa Marketplace

Bridges to Interfaith Understanding

A joint initiative between the Howard County Interfaith Advisory Council (IAC), Howard County Executive Calvin Ball, and the Office of Human Rights & Equity, the inaugural Bridges to Interfaith Understanding program ran for seven weeks in spring of 2025. Each week included a facilitated dialogue and learning session and a visit to a place of worship.

Through guided discussions, immersive experiences, and shared stories, our incredible first cohort created a supportive space for exploring the rich diversity of beliefs and traditions in Howard County as they built bridges of understanding across faiths and cultures.

The program was led by OHRE Outreach and Communications Manager Liv Alanis Myers, Reverend Paige Getty, Rabbi Gordon Fuller, and Reverend Mary Sulerud.

Our deepest thanks to our friends and partners at:

- Maryland Turkish American Inhabitants (MARTI)
- Beth Shalom Congregation
- St. John's Episcopal Church, Ellicott City, MD
- St John Baptist Church - Columbia, MD



EQUITY & RESTORATIVE PRACTICES UNIT

The Equity and Restorative Practices Unit (ERPU) is responsible for ensuring the shared values of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are embedded throughout all aspect of the workforce, programs, and services cultivation an inclusive climate and culture. In order to center equity in all we do, from advisement to organizational practices, the work is aligned with the value OHRE’s mission of embracing equity, inclusion, belonging, and intentionally designed to embed the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) through outreach, cross departmental collaborations, programming and learning, and community outreach.

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 inclusion 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** 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
(she/her)

Equity & Restorative
Practices Manager

2025 Equity Advisory Committee (EAC)

The 2025-2026 EAC is comprised of 12 members who represent various position levels, departments/offices, and scope of work within the government. In 2025, the EAC was instrumental in deepening their understanding of GARE approach called Visualize, Normalize, Organize, Operationalize (VNOO), valuing deep listening, collaborative leadership, and understanding power dynamics to transform operations and services for a just multiracial workforce and community. At the summer annual retreat, GARE Ambassadors had the opportunity to meet with GARE's Director of Innovative Programs, Olusola Tribble to learn about GARE's work to identify and implement strategies to dismantle barriers to belonging and inclusion, building community trust, and methods to provide equity resources on the County employee Equity & Restorative Practices SharePoint Portal.

GARE Steering Committee

The Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) national network comprises racial equity leaders and practitioners who design and implement strategies to transform government and create a strong multiracial democracy. The GARE Steering Committee, selected from member jurisdictions, serve as the practitioner voice to advise, shape, and guide the GARE's strategic direction. Dr. Boston is a member representing Region 3. Several of the committee members attended the "Looking Back to Move Forward: 2025 GARE Leaders' Summit" in September. More than 100 leaders from the network met in Montgomery, AL to discuss how we can leverage our collective power that stands up for democracy, dignity, and justice.

Racial Equity Leadership Lab (RELL)

The RELL professional development 5-module cohort leadership series was offered this year to Cohort 5 in Spring 2026 with 7 county leaders. This program provided a series of five-modules for government leaders with the following goals and objectives: 1) to acquire strategies for addressing racial inequities in Howard County Government departments and offices; 2) a focus on values that guide leadership work for racial and social justice; 3) to ensure a collective and reflective approach to confronting interpersonal, institutional, and structural racism; and 4) to apply a racial equity lens in decision-making. This training won a NACo's award in 2024 *Creating An Ecosystem for Racial Equity, Inclusion & Belonging: Investing in Cross-System Leadership*.

GARE Ambassadors

The Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) is a Membership Network that enables government racial equity leads, staff, and subject area experts to exchange information, access resources, and develop and implement equity and inclusion strategies. The Equity Restorative Manager convened the cross-departmental GARE Ambassador working group in 2023. The ambassadors, comprised of 8 members, meet quarterly to develop and implement strategies to incentivize staff to become GARE members, participate in workshops, seminars, and conferences, and implement resources within their departments and offices.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS (SELECTED)

- Leadership Howard County Premier Program's Local Government Day Premier Class of 2025
- Unlearn University Annual Conference
- Fostering Hope: A Mental Health Summit for Youth and Parents
- Howard Hughes Juneteenth Lunch & Learn
- DEI Under Fire: Strategies for Moving Forward in Today's Political Landscape
- River Hill High School Diversity Association's 2025 DEI Conference

TRAININGS (SELECTED)

- Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) I: Foundational (Virtual) Training
- Cracking the Codes Filming & Dialogue Virtual Training
- Bureau of Utilities Staff Belonging & Inclusion Training
- Building Narrative Power for Community-Centered Coalitions
- A Call For Generational Legacy to Meet the Moment

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

In 2025, the National Association of Counties (NACo) awarded the Office of Human Rights & Equity with a 2025 NACo Achievement Award in Civic Education and Public Information (Best in Category) for the **Community Ambassador Training Program**.

The Community Ambassador Training Program is an initiative organized by the Office of Human Rights & Equity in partnership with the Office of the County Executive and Howard County Administration.

This initiative makes community members aware of Howard County government offices and departments while also providing them with an understanding of the services and resources available to them.

More specifically, the program seeks to turn residents into Community Ambassadors that are equipped to tell their neighbors about the resources and services available to them, as they have need. It provides attendees with the contacts, information, and connections necessary to be informed citizens who experience all that Howard County Government has to offer.



OHRE COMMISSIONS

OHRE COMMISSIONS

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.

1 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Human Rights Commission meets at 7p.m. on the 3rd Thursday of each month, with the exception of August.

2 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. HOLIDAY COMMISSION

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission meets at 6p.m. on the 1st Wednesday of each month, with the exception of July.

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.

4 LGBTQIA+ COMMISSION

The LGBTQIA+ Commission meets bi-monthly on at 6:30 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of these months: January, March, May, July, September, November.

5 ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER (AAPI) COMMISSION

The AAPI Commission meets bi-monthly on the at 6p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of these months: February, April, June, August, October, December.



**OHRE Commission Strategic Planning Summit
September 13, 2025**

All five of the Office of Human Rights & Equity Commissions came together for the first time at the inaugural OHRE Commission Strategic Planning Summit at the Harriet Tubman Cultural Center. In a full day of programming led by OHRE Administrator LaKeisha McClendon, and joined by Howard County Executive Calvin Ball and Chief of Staff Angela Cabellon, our dedicated Commissioners joined together to create a shared vision for elevating community voices, building belonging, strengthening collaboration, and driving equity outcomes through their Commission work.

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The Howard County Human Rights Commission (HRC) is proud of the work it has done in furtherance of its mission to cultivate a community where the ideals of non-discrimination, diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and respect 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 Lunar New Year Celebration, the Black History Expo, Howard County Trans Day of Visibility, Yom Hashoah (Holocaust) Commemoration, the Caribbean Festival, a Know Your Local Leaders event, and the Maryland Civil Rights Commission Gala. The Commission was also represented at the OHRE Commission Strategic Planning Summit in September 2025 during which HRC Commissioners collaborated with other commissions on our shared mission to protect and promote human rights in the County. In addition, the HRC issued a statement on January 15, 2025 regarding student protests against the war in Gaza at Howard County high schools after several residents raised concerns regarding censorship.

For the second consecutive year, the HRC partnered with the Office of Human Rights & Equity (OHRE) to host a Hate Has No Place public forum focused on providing an opportunity for community members to ask questions about reporting hate crimes and hate bias incidents, learn from the Community Outreach Team of the Howard County Policy Department how these reports are investigated by law enforcement, and participate in a discussion on the current state of hate in Howard County. Coincidentally, the forum was held on September 11th, a date that served as a powerful reminder of the need to confront and eliminate hate within our community.

In January 2025, 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 2025, four appeal cases were heard and considered by the Commission. In addition, Commission members advanced their commitment to eradicating discrimination by engaging in educational opportunities, including Bystander Training and participating in webinars on critical topics such as addressing the realities of human trafficking, hosted by the OHRE. At the monthly meetings of the Commission, we continued our custom of engaging our student commissioner on the status of their project, reporting on work done by our standing committees, as well as receiving reports from our liaisons to the other commissions, namely LGBTQIA+, La Alianza Latina, and the Asian American & Pacific Islander Commission.

As in past years, in October 2025 we held our annual Human Rights Commission Awards Ceremony but this year it was at a new location, Howard County Community College, Rouse Company Foundation Student Services Hall. 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 three awardees for their selfless work, devotion, and commitment to improving the community by uplifting others: Mae A. Beale (recipient of the James E. Henson Sr. & Jean W. Toomer Award); Indian Cultural Association of Howard County (recipient of the Colette Roberts Organization Award); and Mark Li (recipient of the Dr. Murray Simon Student Award).

The above activities and actions reflect the unwavering dedication and hard work of the members the Commission, supported by the guidance and leadership of OHRE staff. We remain committed to advancing our mission further in 2026 and beyond.

Sincerely,

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

Tiffany Releford
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. **Tiffany Releford (she/her)** (Exp: 10/7/27), *Chair*
2. **Scott Markow (he/him)** (Exp: 3/6/26), *Vice Chair*
3. **Cristiana Little (she/her)** (Exp: 10/7/27), *Corresponding Secretary*
4. **Bianca Chang (she/her)** (Exp: 3/1/25)
5. **Jeff Rubin (he/him)** (Exp: 3/3/28)
6. **Kui Zhao (she/her)** (Exp: 3/1/25)
7. **Nhaomie Douyon (she/her)** (Exp: 12/1/28)
8. **Nina Basu (she/her)** (Exp: 4/4/25)
9. **Reginald Avery (he/him)** (Exp: 3/3/28)
10. **Robert (Bob) Ford (he/him)** (Exp: 3/6/26)
11. **Sabeen Sheikh (she/her)** (Exp: 12/1/28)
12. **Shannon Beasley Taitt (she/her)** (Exp: 7/29/27)
13. **Valerie Montague (she/her)** (Exp: 7/29/27)
14. **Mark Li (he/him)**, High School Representative (Exp: 6/30/26)
15. **Sakshi Vineet Tirodkar (she/her)**, High School Representative (Exp: 6/30/25)

CONTACT & FOR MORE INFORMATION

HRC@howardcountymd.gov

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 56th Human Rights Commission Awards Ceremony took place at the Owen Brown Interfaith Center on Thursday, October 23, 2025.

2025 AWARD RECIPIENTS:

James E. Henson, Sr. & Jean W. Toomer Award: *Mae A. Beale*

Mae A. Beale is the Chair of the Maryland Democratic Party (MDP) Seniors Diversity Leadership Council, where she works to energize seniors throughout the state, increase voter registration, engage with members of the diverse Senior communities, and turn out voters throughout Maryland. In 2024, she was appointed by Governor Wes Moore to serve on the Maryland Commission on Aging. Her other roles include serving as a board member for the Howard County Foundation for Black Educational and Cultural Achievement, an organization she has served with for over three decades, and as Acting Chair of the Howard County Commission for Women. She is also a board member of the Owen Brown Village in Columbia, Maryland, and a member of St John Baptist Church.

Dr. Murray Simon Student Award: *Mark Li*

Mark Li is a junior at River Hill High School who co-founded the Asian American Youth Ambassadors Program. He now hosts a podcast that convenes activists, officials, and students to discuss identity and justice. Mark also serves on the Maryland Youth Advisory Council to Governor Wes Moore, where he focuses on expanding civic engagement and youth representation in government.

Colette Roberts Organization Award: *Indian Cultural Association of Howard County (ICA)*

Founded just seven years ago, the **Indian Cultural Association of Howard County (ICA)** has rapidly grown into the largest cultural organization in Maryland. With the mission of preserving and sharing Indian heritage and serving the most vulnerable, ICA has become a trusted force for both cultural celebration and humanitarian response. Under the leadership of President Sanjay Srivastava and Executive Director Niti Srivastava, ICA has distributed over 3.5 million pounds of food to families in need, more than any other organization in the county. Volunteers operated across 200+ pop-up pantries, delivering food to schools, shelters, senior homes, and apartment complexes. Beyond food relief, ICA continues to host cultural festivals, senior socials, youth programs, and civic engagement programs



**MARTIN
LUTHER KING,
JR. HOLIDAY
COMMISSION**



Dear Friends,

As I conclude my time as Chair, I am incredibly proud of the accomplishments of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission during 2025. We were fortunate to be joined by six new commissioners this year who worked diligently to fulfill our mission to honor the life and legacy of Dr. King by promoting his message of justice, equality, and beloved community. During my 7 years as Vice Chair and Chair, I am deeply humbled to have been in the presence of insightful and outstanding student commissioners representing schools throughout Howard County.

This year, Commissioners engaged with the community at many events, including the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Festival, Howard County Pride Festival, and Kwanzaa. Of particular interest, in October, the Office of Human Rights & Equity hosted the inaugural OHRE Commission Strategic Planning Summit where the five commissions had an opportunity to develop a shared purpose, vision, strategic goals, and collaborative programming looking forward. It was a very productive full-day event with an intentional focus on connection and relationship building.

Our 2025 MLK Celebration centered around the theme of "Today, our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas, to remain vigilant and to face the challenge of change," and showcased the power of unity among MLK Holiday Commissioners, students, and community members. Highlights of the event included powerful remarks from Howard County Executive Calvin Ball, Howard County Council Chair, Liz Walsh and Keynote speaker Shayla Adams-Stanford. We were also treated to a powerful poetry presentation from Howard County's 2026-2026 Poet Laureate, Truth Thomas, an oratory performance, and recognized the winners of our student contests.

In the tradition of Dr. King, Jr's birthday being, "A Day On, Not a Day Off", the commissioners offered numerous activities for the community to honor the Civil Rights Leader's legacy through service and educational programs at the Harriet Tubman Cultural Center. Through collaboration with the Howard County Office of Human Rights & Equity Staff, the Harriet Tubman Foundation, and other community partners, our commission distributed food to over 6,000 community members this year at our monthly Pop-Up Pantry events.

As commissioners, it has been an honor and a privilege to serve our community and share Dr. King's remarkable legacy. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all who contributed to the success of this year's initiatives.

Sincerely,

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, Howard County honors Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. through a community-wide celebration and a Day of Service. The Day of Service offers a variety of volunteer opportunities across the county that reflect Dr. King's commitment to servant leadership and caring for others.

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 & 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, approximately 30,200 families have received a monthly allotment of much-needed nutritious groceries.

COMMISSIONERS

1. **Kurt Wall (he/him)** (Exp: 5/6/27), *Chair*
2. **James Hollywood III (he/him)** (Exp: 3/5/27), *Vice Chair*
3. **Dr. Abbie Diane Martin (she/her)** (Exp: 3/6/27)
4. **Algie Marvel (she/her)** (Exp: 11/3/28)
5. **Brett Vess (he/him)** (Exp: 5/5/28)
6. **Daima Lewis (she/her)** (Exp: 4/7/28)
7. **Jennifer-NeToi Claiborne (she/her)** (Exp: 3/3/28)
8. **Karen Foxworth (she/her)** (Exp: 3/3/28)
9. **Kerry G. Johnson (he/him)** (Exp: 3/3/28)
10. **Margaret Stephens (she/her)** (Exp: 3/3/28)
11. **Tamerdis Hollywood (she/her)** (Exp: 7/1/27)
12. **Teresa Garcia (she/her)** (Exp: 5/6/27)
13. **Tina Horn (she/her)** (Exp: 5/1/27)
14. **Nathanial Clarke (he/him)**, High School Representative (Exp: 10/6/26)
15. **Hemant Kantheti (he/him)**, High School Representative (Exp: 10/6/26)

CONTACT & FOR MORE INFORMATION

MLK@howardcountymd.gov
www.howardcountymd.gov/OHRE-mlk

20 AWARD 25 WINNERS

The annual Howard County Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Celebration honors Dr. King's legacy through reflection, education, and community unity, featuring keynote remarks, student and community participation, and recognition of service and leadership that advance justice, equity, and beloved community. The 2025 Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration took place at Howard Community College on Saturday, January 11, 2025.

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

INDIVIDUAL: Betania Adane

STUDENT: Eliab Belete

ORGANIZATION: Harriet Tubman Foundation of Howard County

FOOD DRIVE COMPETITION: In 2025, four schools collectively raised 2,242 pounds of food, which was donated to the Howard County Food Bank.

WINNER: Glenelg High School, raising a total of 1,062 pounds of food and baby supplies.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS:

1ST PLACE

Jocara Knight, Jr., 9th Grade, Oakland Mills High School

2ND PLACE

Vivian Cai, 10th Grade, River Hill High School

3RD PLACE

Kekeli Dedjoe, 12th Grade, Long Reach High School

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS:

1ST PLACE

Alyssa Bryan, 6th Grade, Lime Kiln Middle School

2ND PLACE

Darshit Gedela, 7th Grade, Mount View Middle School

3RD PLACE

Tara Oye-Awofeso, 8th Grade, Patuxent Valley Middle School

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT POSTER CONTEST WINNERS:



1ST PLACE

Calvin Peng,
3rd Grade, Hammond
Elementary School



2ND PLACE

Rehan T. Syed,
4th Grade,
Waverly Elementary
School



3RD PLACE (TIE)

Andre Bryan, 4th Grade,
Fulton Elementary School



3RD PLACE (TIE)

Nikhil Vandan Rathinam,
3rd Grade, St. Johns Lane
Elementary School

20 AWARD 25 WINNERS

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT POSTER CONTEST WINNERS:



1ST PLACE
Ayan Patel
6th Grade, Patapsco Middle School



2ND PLACE
Jordan Knight,
6th Grade, Oakland Mills Middle
School

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT POSTER CONTEST WINNERS:



1ST PLACE
Yiran Xiao,
11th Grade, Glenelg
Country School



2ND PLACE
Hailey Hyde,
10th Grade, Long Reach
High School



3RD PLACE
Karter Shorts,
10th Grade, Long Reach
High School

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ORATORY CONTEST WINNER: Jadesayo Isabella Akinbinu, 12th Grade, Long Reach High School





Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service January 12, 2025

Hosted by the Howard County Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission, Howard County Executive Calvin Ball, and OHRE, the 2025 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service at the Harriet Tubman Cultural Center was an incredible day for all involved. Our partners from Columbia Community Care, Building Families for Children, HopeWorks of Howard County, the Howard County Health Department, Kits to Heart, Howard County Library System, Jewish Federation of Howard County, and AAPI Youth Ambassadors of Howard County led attendees in meaningful service opportunities, education and projects that embody Dr. King's dedication to equality and social justice.

LGBTQIA+
COMMISSION



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

The past year has made one thing unmistakably clear: LGBTQIA+ people—especially transgender and nonbinary individuals—are being targeted in deliberate and deeply personal ways. Across the country, our identities have been politicized, our healthcare debated, and our presence in schools and public life challenged.

Let me be clear: our existence is not a political talking point. It is a fact of Howard County's life.

In this moment, visibility is not symbolic—it is protective. Presence is not performative—it is necessary. When national rhetoric becomes hostile, local government is often where safety is upheld or surrendered.

Throughout 2025, the Howard County LGBTQIA+ Commission has met this moment with purpose. We have listened to community members who are exhausted and fearful, yet still showing up. We have centered those most directly impacted—transgender, nonbinary, and gender-diverse residents—whose lives are too often debated without consent and legislated without voice.

This year required more than celebration. It required steadiness. We continued advocating for policies and practices that affirm dignity, access, and safety. We strengthened partnerships to reinforce a simple truth: LGBTQIA+ people are not abstractions—we are neighbors, parents, students, workers, elders, and leaders. Inclusion in Howard County is not conditional or temporary.

To those carrying fatigue or grief: you are not alone. The Commission recognizes the toll of constant scrutiny and remains committed to spaces of care, connection, and affirmation alongside policy and advocacy. To everyone who has spoken up, checked on a neighbor, or refused to disappear—your courage sustains this work.

Our role is not ornamental. The Commission is part of the county's civic infrastructure—translating lived experience into action and accountability. When voices are targeted, our obligation is amplification. When fear rises, our obligation is steadiness.

Looking ahead, our commitment is unwavering: to defend the full spectrum of LGBTQIA+ identities, ensure county government remains accessible and trustworthy, and stand publicly with those most at risk.

As my two-year term as Chair comes to a close, I am proud of the work this Commission carried together during a period that demanded urgency, care, and resolve. I am confident in the leadership that will carry this work forward and grateful to the commissioners, partners, and community members who affirmed this work is bigger than any one person, role, or term.

Howard County is stronger when its LGBTQIA+ community is safe, visible, and valued. The Commission remains resolute in that truth—and in our responsibility to uphold it.

With resolve and pride,

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

Brian S. Bailey, Chair, Howard County LGBTQIA+ Commission (2024–2025)

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*
3. **Beck Rainbow Lynn Seckler (they/it)** (Exp: 11/6/26), *Corresponding Secretary*
4. **Bob Ford (he/him)** (Exp: 10/31/25)
5. **Danielle DuPuis (she/her)** (Ex-Officio: Howard County Public School System)
6. **Emily Hazel Redzich (she/her)** (Exp: 3/3/28)
7. **Faye Liberatore (she/her)** (Exp: 12/1/28)
8. **Grace Anastasiadis (she/her)** (Ex-Officio: Howard Community College)
9. **Janeé M. Pelletier (she/her)** (Exp: 11/4/27)
10. **Jordan Dorsey (they/them)** (Exp: 3/3/28)
11. **Laura Crovo (she/her)**, Grassroots Representative (Exp: 3/3/28)
12. **Michael Mueller (he/him)** (Exp: 3/3/28)
13. **Robin Gillispie (she/her)** (Exp: 10/7/27)
14. **Sue Bryant (she/her)**, CARY Representative (Exp: 12/2/27)
15. **Thomas Zei (he/him)** (Exp: 2/5/27)
16. **Veronica Wright (she/her)** (Exp: 3/3/28)
17. **Kylee Muffoletto (any)**, High School Representative (Exp: 6/30/26)

CONTACT & FOR MORE INFORMATION

LGBTQIA@howardcountymd.gov

www.howardcountymd.gov/boards-commissions/lgbtqia-commission



HopeWorks Hope Bowl

March 22, 2025

The LGBTQIA+ Commission served as one of the sponsors for this annual event hosted at Bowlero Columbia, where teams compete while raising awareness and critical funds for violence prevention initiatives. The Commission team raised an additional \$600 in funds, directly supporting HopeWorks' efforts to advocate for and support survivors of intimate partner and sexual violence in Howard County.

Trans Day of Visibility

June 6, 2025

TDOV 2025 welcomed over 150 attendees to the Elkridge 50+ Center for a dance floor with DJ Kotic Couture, a game room, reading area, community art room, trans history display and trivia game, community message board, a reading room, and resources for the trans community from our partners at Howard County Library System, PFLAG Howard County, CARY (Community Allies of Rainbow Youth), and the Howard County Department of Community Resources and Services.



Progress Pride Flag Raising

June 3, 2025

The Howard County LGBTQIA+ Commission joined County Executive Calvin Ball, Byron E. Macfarlane, Councilmember Christiana Rigby, and a supportive crowd of elected officials, community members, and partners in raising the Progress Pride flag over Howard County for the third consecutive year.

Legacy Leadership

July 15-17, 2025

In summer 2025, HCPSS Pride established a "Legacy Leadership" program for GSA/SAGA (Gender and Sexuality Alliances/Affinity Groups) students and students interested in LGBTQIA+ advocacy to participate in a summer institute. Led by Commissioner Danielle DuPuis, Commissioner Michael Mueller and Executive Secretary Liv Alanis Myers presented sessions to support student growth and leadership skill development.



LGBTQIA+ COMMISSION 2025 HIGHLIGHTS (CONT.)

OUTREACH EVENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS (SELECTED)



Chase Brexton National Honor our LGBTQIA+ Elders Day (NHOLED) Celebration



Old Ellicott City (OEC) and HoCo Pride Celebrations



River Hill's 2025 Spring DEI Conference



HCPSS Reimagine the Rainbow Unconference

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

- **Estate Planning for the LGBTQIA+ Community**, in partnership with Chase Brexton
- **Safeguarding Our Rights: Legal Strategies for the LGBTQIA+ Community** with Byron Macfarlane, Howard County Register of Wills, and Lauren Pruitt, Legal Director of Free State Justice
- **HCPSS LGBTeaQI&A Series**, in partnership with HCPSS Pride

**LA ALIANZA
LATINA
COMMISSION**

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSION CHAIR



Dear Community Members, Partners, and Supporters,

On behalf of the La Alianza Latina Commission, we are excited to share the highlights of our work and community presence throughout 2025.

This year, La Alianza Latina Commission continued to work tirelessly to be seen as a trusted voice and partner for Latino and immigrant families across Howard County. Through our active participation in cultural celebrations, community-service activities, and collaborative advocacy efforts, we effectively promoted unity and opportunity for all residents.

The Commission maintained a visible and active presence in civic spaces throughout the year. We attended events that brought together local leaders, government officials, and community advocates to discuss issues affecting immigrant and Latino communities.

We also reinforced our commitment to justice by attending and supporting regional civil rights convenings, including the annual Maryland Commission on Civil Rights Gala.

We strengthened relationships with partners across the county and proudly presented our third annual Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration. Thanks to the support of the County Executive's Office, Office of Human Rights & Equity, and our broader community, the event was a tremendous success, promoting cultural acceptance, diversity, unity, and community pride.

Furthermore, Alianza Latina strengthened relationships across diverse communities by being present at events like the Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month Celebration and local heritage festivities. Our participation ensured we were there to build visibility, listen, and learn, acting as a respectful partner to communities whose experiences often parallel our own.

Promoting community safety remained a priority. Through attendance at events such as National Night Out, Purple Light Nights, and Hate Has No Place informational sessions, we supported countywide efforts to raise awareness about crime prevention, domestic violence, and the reporting of hate crimes and bias incidents. Collectively, these efforts strengthened our role as an advocate for community safety, dignity, and justice.

Beyond events, La Alianza Latina expanded our outreach through dedicated volunteerism and partnerships, committing to strengthening the social, educational, and economic fabric of Howard County's Latino community:

- **Food Security:** Partnered with Columbia Community Care, supporting food-distribution efforts to assist families facing food insecurity.
- **Education:** Engaged with the Howard County Public School System by participating in school events, reading to children, and supporting culturally responsive programming.
- **Networking:** Hosted Latino networking gatherings, providing vital spaces for connection, mentorship, and shared professional development.
- **Resource Access:** Collaborated with local government agencies, the Maryland Comptroller's Office, and multiple embassies, helping community members access accurate information, resources, and culturally competent support.

Looking Ahead

As we reflect on 2025, we are proud of the progress made through both our presence and our deeper engagement across the county. La Alianza Latina will continue to show up, listen, advocate, and collaborate to ensure that Latino and immigrant communities have the support, representation, and opportunities they deserve.

We extend our sincere gratitude to our volunteers, partners, and community members for their dedication and trust. Together, we will continue building a more inclusive, equitable, and welcoming Howard County for all.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alicia Altamirano'.

Alicia Altamirano, Chair
2024-2025 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 18 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. **Alicia Altamirano (she/her)** (Exp: 3/3/28), *Chair*
2. **Gaston Gamez (he/him)** (Ex-Officio: Howard County Public School System), *Vice Chair*
3. **Sheila Alvelo (she/her)** (Ex-Officio: Howard Community College), *Corresponding Secretary*
4. **Andrea Rizkallah (she/her)**, Conexiones Representative (Exp: 10/7/27)
5. **Cris Oviedo (she/her)** (Exp: 12/1/28)
6. **Cristiana Little (she/her)**, Human Rights Commission Liaison (Exp: 6/2/28)
7. **Daniela Flores (she/her)**, Grassroots Representative (Exp: 11/6/26)
8. **Danielle Duran Baron (she/her)** (Exp: 10/31/25)
9. **Dr. Evelyn Rosario (she/her)** (Exp: 3/3/28)
10. **Elvira Domínguez McCullough (she/her)** (Exp: 12/4/26)
11. **Felicita Sola-Carter (she/her)** (Exp: 10/31/25)
12. **Gabriel Moreno (he/him)**, Luminus Representative (Exp: 12/2/27)
13. **Luzmila Robinson (she/her)** (Exp: 12/2/28)
14. **Santiago Carrera (he/him)**, Business Community Representative (Exp: 3/3/28)
15. **Yolanda Vazquez (she/her)** (Exp: 12/4/26)
16. **Dr. Yvette Oquendo (she/her)** (Exp: 10/31/25)
17. **Yeimy Benitz (she/her)**, College/Trade School Representative (Exp: 6/30/26)
18. **Maricarmen Perez-Sarabia (she/her)**, High School Representative (Exp: 6/30/25)

CONTACT & FOR MORE INFORMATION

alianzalatina@howardcountymd.gov
www.howardcountymd.gov/boards-commissions/la-alianza-latina-commission



**Howard County Hispanic Heritage Festival
October 4, 2025**

La Alianza Latina Commission’s Events Committee successfully spearheaded the Hispanic Heritage Festival on October 4, 2025. Hosted at Color Burst Park in the Merriweather District, the event served as a premier cultural hub, drawing over 1,000 attendees. Through strategic partnerships with the Merriweather Arts and Culture Center and Howard Hughes, the Commission effectively blended cultural celebration with resource accessibility. The festival showcased the vibrant diversity of the Hispanic community through a curated selection of 10 performance groups, 5 featured artists, and 17 local business vendors, while simultaneously connecting residents with 11 vital resource providers.

Columbia Community Care Food Distributions July 19 and August 23, 2025

In a dedicated effort to support Howard County families, La Alianza Latina Commission completed its inaugural volunteer project with Columbia Community Care (CCC) on July 19, 2025. Commissioners worked on the front lines of food equity, packaging and delivering over 120 bags of groceries to two dozen households. Recognizing that summer break often results in the loss of subsidized school meals, the Commission identified this period as a "critical need" window for local families. By returning for a second service day on August 23, 2025, La Alianza reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring that Howard County residents maintained access to healthy, nutritious food while schools were out of session.



Naturalemente Latino with Howard County Recreation and Parks September 27th, 2025

La Alianza Latina Commission, in partnership with Howard County Recreation and Parks, hosted the Naturalemente Latino event at the Robinson Nature Center. The celebration drew 100 attendees and explored the profound influence of nature on Latin American culture. Highlights included a guided walk focused on Hispanic plant heritage, the creation of masks and instruments from natural materials, and a specialized planetarium show detailing Southern Hemisphere constellations and celestial folklore.

OUTREACH EVENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS (SELECTED)

- St. John The Evangelist Church Mental Health Conference
- Howard Community College (HCC) President's Gala
- Howard Community College Partner Luncheon
- Governor's Commission on Hispanic and Latin American Community Affairs
- National Night Out
- Maryland Commission on Civil Rights Gala
- Hate Has No Place
- Hispanic Heritage Celebration at Oakland Mills Elementary School
- 2025 State of the County
- Howard County Public School System's (HCPSS) Hispanic Heritage Month Resources Fair at Deep Run Elementary School
- Purple Light Nights – Domestic Violence Awareness
- Reimagine the Rainbow Unconference with HCPSS Pride

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**ASIAN
AMERICAN
& PACIFIC
ISLANDER
COMMISSION**



Dear friends,

2025 has been a year of change, challenge and opportunity. Through all of it, I am deeply grateful to live in Howard County, a place that truly reflects diversity and inclusion. Our Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community continues to be a cornerstone of the county's strength and success, with one in five residents identifying as AAPI. True diversity is more than representation; it is belonging. Building that sense of belonging is at the heart of the Commission's work.

This past year, the AAPI Commission advanced its mission through cultural programming, policy engagement, and civic outreach. From hosting signature events to engaging in policy discussions, to partnering with community organizations, we continue to expand our reach and impact.

Our annual Lunar New Year celebration remains a cherished tradition. On January 25, 2025, thousands joined us at Columbia Mall to welcome the Year of the Snake, with vibrant performances, rich cultural expressions, and intergenerational celebration. Our 4th Annual AAPI Festival was another highlight, drawing approximately 6,000 attendees to Merriweather Park at Symphony Woods. This year's theme—Strength, Resilience, and Growth—was embodied across every performance, vendor, and smiling face. Like the banyan tree that symbolizes deep roots in many AAPI cultures, our community continues to grow, thrive, and support one another. Civic participation also remained a priority. Nearly 100 community members attended our 2nd Annual Know Your Local Leaders Forum to engage directly with elected officials and learn how government works. Democracy is not a spectator sport; empowering residents to build relationships with their representatives strengthens our collective civic voice.

Our work is not only for AAPI communities. Throughout the year, we consistently showed up for and supported other commissions and community organizations, because belonging is strengthened when communities stand together. We envision the AAPI Cultural Center as a space rooted in AAPI cultures and experiences yet open and welcoming to all. The Commission has continued shaping its vision, design, and uses, and we look forward to its role as the first dedicated physical space for AAPI programming and community building in Howard County.

This year, the Commission also engaged in internal strategic planning through retreats with OHRE and our own commissioners. We reaffirmed our values and discussed how to continue meaningful work within changing fiscal realities. We are expanding thoughtfully, including engaging in policy discussions on language access, planning our first health fair, and sponsoring a student art contest in celebration of the nation's 250th anniversary.

It has been an honor to serve as the inaugural Chair of the AAPI Commission. I extend my deepest thanks to our Commissioners, County Executive Calvin Ball, the Office of Human Rights & Equity, our community partners, and the AAPI community for your support, engagement, and trust. I am excited to see the Commission reach new heights under its new leadership in 2026 and beyond.

Together, we will continue building, advocating, and celebrating, so that every member of our community feels seen, heard, valued, and a true sense of belonging.

Sincerely,

Lanlan Xu

Lanlan Xu
Chair, Howard County AAPI Commission

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. (she/her)** (Exp: 3/6/26), *Chair*
2. **Dhaval Shah (he/him)** (Exp: 3/6/26), *Vice Chair until August 2025*
3. **Dr. Razia F. Kosi (she/her)** (Ex-Officio for Howard County Public School System), *Vice Chair beginning September 2025*
4. **Ashton Bui (he/him)**, High School Representative (Exp: 6/30/25), *Corresponding Secretary*
5. **Diane Li (she/her)** (Ex-Officio for Howard County Library System)
6. **Dr. Yang Yu (she/her)** (Ex-Officio for Howard Community College)
7. **Helen Won (she/her)** (Exp: 3/6/26)
8. **Jeff Rubin (he/him)** (Exp: 3/3/28), Human Rights Commission Liaison beginning June 2025
9. **Jin "JC" Chung (he/him)** (Exp: 3/4/27)
10. **Jodie Wang (she/her)** (Exp: 3/6/26)
11. **Khin Rupa Waddy Maung, M.D. (she/her)** (Exp: 3/6/26)
12. **Kimberly Eggborn (she/her)** (Exp: 3/6/26)
13. **Kui Zhao (she/her)**, Human Rights Commission Liaison until March 2025 (Exp: 5/6/27)
14. **Madiha Rahimi (she/her)** (Exp: 3/4/27)
15. **May-Fong Tsay (she/her)** (Exp: 3/6/26)
16. **Misako Aoki (she/her)** (Exp: 3/6/25)
17. **Naresh C. Das, Ph.D. (he/him)** (Exp: 3/6/25)
18. **Saffiyah Gonzales Madraswala (she/her)** (Exp: 3/4/27)
19. **Sameer C. Ahirrao (he/him)** (Exp: 3/6/26)
20. **Sanjay George (he/him)** (Exp: 3/6/25)
21. **Sanjeev Gholap (he/him)** (Exp: 3/4/27)
22. **Tomoko Hoogenboom, Ph.D. (she/her)** (Exp: 3/6/26)
23. **Young Ran Smith (she/her)** (Exp: 3/6/26)
24. **Aanya Contractor (she/her)**, High School Representative (Exp: 6/30/26)

CONTACT & FOR MORE INFORMATION

AAPI@howardcountymd.gov

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



**Howard County Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Festival
June 11, 2025**

The 4th Annual Howard County Asian American Pacific Islander Festival served as a cornerstone of the year's cultural programming, drawing approximately 6,000 attendees to Merriweather Park at Symphony Woods. Guided by the theme of "Strength, Resilience, and Growth," the event celebrated the deep roots and vibrant contributions of the Asian American Pacific Islander community. Through diverse performances and local vendors, the festival provided a vital space for residents to connect, thrive, and reinforce the communal support that defines the county's Asian American Pacific Islander heritage.



**Know Your Local Leaders
June 11, 2025**

Civic engagement remained a cornerstone of the AAPI Commission’s 2025 mission. Nearly 100 community members participated in the second Know Your Local Leaders Forum, where they engaged directly with elected officials to better understand the inner workings of local government. By empowering residents to build personal relationships with their representatives, this forum moved beyond "spectator democracy" to actively strengthen our collective civic voice.



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 & 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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