

§ 9-2404. Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MACDHH)

*Special Meeting—Continuation of Agenda from September 25, 2020 meeting
November 6, 2020 via Zoom.com*

MACDHH Council Members presented and seen via Zoom:

Present: Chair Lisalee Egbert, Vice Chair Marny Helfrich, Secretary Vikki Porter, Dakota Burgess, Janet Moye Cornick, Spencer Dove, Lisalee Egbert, Gregory James, Mary Lynn Lally, Eddie Martinez, Norma Moran, Gordon Outlaw, Dawn Padon, Kristen Patterson, Erin Buck Skees, Michele Westfall, and Victoria Wilkins.

Absent: Veronica Davila-Steele and Alena Troxel

Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) Staff: Kelby Brick, TraciAnn Hoglind, and Jacob Salem.

Call to Order: 1:06 PM

Introduction of new Council members: Chair Egbert welcomed Kristen Patterson from Department of Labor and Eddie Martinez, DeafBlind representative.

Continuation of Old Business: Chair Egbert gave the floor to Council Member Lally to continue the discussion about systemic injustice. Council Member Lally pointed out in addition to racial injustice, particularly for Black people, other issues such as lack of access to various services within the prison system for Deaf people need to be addressed to ensure equality. Secretary Porter noted her concern with lumping different types of systemic injustice issues into one pot—i.e. Black people experiences being different than what Deaf people go through—and the double whammy of being in both groups. Council Member Westfall affirmed Secretary Porter's statement, recognizing that different groups have different issues that need to be addressed. She wasn't sure if setting up a committee or task force would be the best way to discuss these concerns. Council Member Moran wanted to know how the council could address this within the limited scope and structure of the council itself. Director Brick recognized Council Member Davilla-Steele's concern from a comment in the chat that the council may not be on the right track. Initially, the concerns about systematic injustice was about racism, and now veered into the oppression of Deaf individuals, which is a whole separate, but still important, issue. Council Member Davilla-Steele inquired about how information regarding Deaf people of color are being tracked throughout the state agencies. Most the state representatives on the council concurred that most likely they are not because services aren't dependent on the hearing status of those consumers in order for them to receive these services, and documentation/data are not captured regarding that. Council Member Buck-Skees pointed out that MSD is unique in its data collection efforts because the entire student population is deaf/hard of hearing. Demographic information would include race.

Council Members Gray and Davilla-Steele wanted to ensure that some type of avenue to track oppression, inequities towards Deaf and hard of hearing individuals based on race and other factors be established in order to effectively address systematic injustices. Council Member Westfall made a motion that a committee be established to work on a way to gather data from various agencies, which would be used to figure out how to address systematic injustice. The motion was passed.

Next on the agenda, Council Member Gray asked for clarification on the difference between Attorney General (AG) and Inspector General (IG). Director Brick explained that AG provides legal matters relevant to the state, while IG investigates allegations of fraud, waste, and abuse. Council Member Gray asked Secretary Porter to review the previous meeting minutes to see if this was brought up. Secretary Porter confirmed it was discussed and agreed on, but it is unclear if the motion was technically passed due to time running out. The council continued to discuss not just systematic racism charges at MSD, but also multiple instances of nepotism and cronyism in hiring practices and favoritisms toward students.

With time dwindling down, it was suggested that instead of rehashing a discussion that was already held in a previous meeting, that reports be distributed before the next regular meeting, with suggested action steps. Council Member Gray stated this provision is already in the bylaws. Director Brick emphasized that the reports, in the interest of transparency and inclusion, be in both English and American Sign Language, and Council Member Gray agreed.

Meeting adjourned: 2:59 pm