Prince George's County
Human Rights Commission

Monday April 27, 2026
Zoom Meeting of the
Prince George's County
Human Rights Commission

Attendees:

Commissioners:

Joseph Reed, Chair
Keith Adams, Vice-Chair
Shonda Harmon, Secretary
Traci Birckhead
Turkessa Brown
Caren Gillison
Erica Jenkins (excused)
Sylvia Johnson
Erin Kabba
Regina Truesdale
Ademola Oduyebo
Kayon Williams

Staff:

Jose Villegas
Acting Executive Director

Azeem Lyons, Clerk
to the Commission

Guests:

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

1. Call to Order – The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Secretary Harmon conducted the roll call for the Commission Meeting. The Chair announced that a quorum was present for the meeting.

2. Adopt Agenda – The Chair called for a review of the agenda. The agenda was approved as distributed.

3. Approval of Minutes of April 27, 2026, Commission meeting. The Chair called for a review of the minutes. The minutes were adopted as distributed.

4. REPORT OF THE CHAIR

Chair Reed wanted to publicly congratulate our Executive Director, Jose Villegas, on his recent confirmation in March. We are glad to have him lead the office and look forward to continuing the work of the commission.

Chair Reed also wanted to flag just several developments in the broader civil human rights landscape, even though they may fall outside of the commission's jurisdiction.
Federal immigration enforcement has an impact on our residents. In March, our Attorney General, Anthony Brown, filed a federal lawsuit over the inhumane conditions at the Baltimore ICE facilities. The report found issues that may likely violate people's 5th Amendment rights, many of these people including Prince George's County residents.

Chair Reed further expressed that it is not just our community feeling the pressure of the civil rights infrastructure being under threat, but rather all of society. Recently, the Department of Justice indicted the Southern Poverty Law Center, one of the country's first and foremost civil rights organizations. Because of this indictment, commissions like this body should be paying very close attention.

Chair Reed also mentioned that at the highest level, the Supreme Court is actively dealing with cases as it relates to trans rights, redistricting, and birthright citizenship. Some of these outcomes will have direct implications on the very populations that the Commission is charged with protecting

Finally, Chair Reed reminded the Commission to keep these issues at the front of mind as we move through, not just our monthly agenda, but in our work in the months ahead.

5. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Executive Director Villegas wanted to confirm his confirmation was successfully conducted on March 24, 2026.

Executive Director Villegas reported that the Office of Human Rights continues to be busy with several events taking place. OHR conducted community conversations - Lunch and Learns - through our partnership with the library system, most recently focusing on the topic of sexual assault awareness. This event was held in partnership with MCASA and University of Maryland Medical Center. OHR also had the privilege to interview the Prince George's County Public Schools Youth Climate Actions Committee Group. This is a group of students that are actively fighting climate within the school settings and within their own schools. In addition, OHR continued conversations regarding the United States Constitution. Commission attorney, Mr. Gabriel Christian and Miss Renee Battle-Brooks, the former director, discussed the first 3 amendments of the Constitution, and this series will continue until they reach the 27th Amendment. Please feel free to join for upcoming sessions, also a podcast may be available.

April is the Fair housing month A community conversation was held on that topic of fair housing. Another OHR conversation was held with Alonso Turner Bay, Director of the Returning Citizens Affairs in the Office of the County Executive. This discussion focused on things being done to assist the returning citizens in our Community. Emphasis was placed on the protections that exist within the Office of Human Rights and this Commission under Division 12 that provide returning citizens with the right to employment and housing.

Executive Director Villegas reaffirmed what Chair Reed stated about state level actions regarding immigration. He wanted to remind the commission of the Community Information resource fair that was held on April 15 at St.Matthew's Episcopal Church in Hyattsville. Several county leaders attended including County Executive Braveboy, Council member Wanika Fisher, the DSS Director, a representative from Amica Centers of Immigrant rights, as well as a representative from Prince George's County Resources Collective organization who provided information about the standby guardianship. Although attendance was low, due in part to the current climate, a social media influencer from the Latino Community live-streamed the event with a reported 7,500 views of their over 400,000 followers. The event was also posted on the Office of Human Rights Facebook page.

OHR continued with the Youth leadership Academy and held the last session of the four session series.

On May 20th, OHR is planning to have a quarterly interfaith event with representatives from different denominations to share lessons of how they have assisted the community and to form common goals to help the community and bridge the gap.

Executive Director Villegas mentioned that Office of Human Rights is hiring an investigator entry level, the job is posted on our website.

OHR will be participating in two large events in the county, both on May 30th. Multicultural parade and the 250 year celebration, both events take place in Bowie. If you would like to participate or volunteer. Please reach out.

Chair Reed added a final reminder regarding financial disclosure statements being due on April 30th. If not completed by April 30, there is a $250 fine.

6. **APPEALS TO CIRCUIT COURT-** None

7. **ATTENDANCE RECORD** – Attached

8. **NEW BUSINESS** – None

9. **OLD BUSINESS** - None

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS – The next commission meeting will be held on May 18, 2026.

11. CLOSED SESSION- None

12. ADJOURNMENT- Motion by Vice Chair Adams and seconded by Commissioner Williams to adjourn the meeting at 5:52pm

Shonda W. Harmon, MBA, MPA

Shonda W. Harmon
Commission Secretary