



# Montgomery County Commission on Health

## ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2023

July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

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On behalf of the Commission on Health (COH), it has been a privilege to have spent this past year working together with our elected officials and esteemed colleagues in Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS) and specifically Public Health Services (PHS). Our work together has afforded us the opportunity to continue our focus on key public health issues impacting the health and wellbeing of Montgomery County residents. This fiscal year the COH theme was “Getting Back to Basics” which signifies our goal of realigning COH activities and strategies to intensify the impact of our advocacy efforts. The COH FY23 Priorities included Access to Care, Environmental Health Education and Public Health Administration. The Commission also took advantage of the opportunity to advocate for the need to strengthen our public health workforce.

The COH continues to advocate for improved access to healthcare in the County. We recommended innovative strategies and programming be used to increase public health services and meet the growing needs of the community including the equitable distribution of services throughout the County, particularly to high need areas. In an effort to raise awareness about common environmental threats, the Commission urged County leaders to increase public health education on the topic using a variety of communication and social marketing strategies. The COH persists in our advocacy to increase the County’s data handling capacity. This advocacy effort was put forth through the Public Health Administration priority that in addition to increasing human resource capacity recommended better use of data to improve program evaluation, facilitate the efficient use of resources, inform decision-making and increase service quality.

The COH respectfully submits the FY23 Annual Report. We hope that it provides you with a glimpse into the work of the Commission. As chair, I have been fortunate to work with a diverse group of professionals, who have selflessly volunteered to be part of this important work. They, in addition to the consummate MCDHHS staff and leadership have enabled this work to go forth. I would be remiss if I did not extend my thanks to the generosity of the ex-officio County Executive and County Council representatives and the Public Health Services department heads who took the time to present about the critical work their departments do. The COH looks forward to our continued work collaborating with and advising the County Executive and County Council as we work together to improve public health in Montgomery County.

*Crystal DeVance-Wilson*

Crystal DeVance-Wilson, PhD, MBA, PHCNS-BC  
Chair, Commission on Health

## Mission and Purpose

The primary mission of the Montgomery County Commission on Health (COH) is to advise the County Executive and the County Council on public health issues, programs, services and the allocation of funds devoted to public health needs and to monitor and assess the priorities of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS) in its efforts to address the health needs of residents in this County. The purpose of this report is to comply with the annual requirement that the COH provide the County Executive and the County Council with an update on the activities of the COH from July 2022 through June 2023.

**CHAPTER 24-24 OF  
THE MONTGOMERY  
COUNTY CODE  
PROVIDES  
AUTHORITY FOR THE  
COMMISSION ON  
HEALTH. THE  
COMMISSION ON  
HEALTH (COH) WAS  
ESTABLISHED ON  
JULY 1, 1988**

## County Code Enabling Legislation Sec. 24-24. Functions

To advise the County Executive and the County Council, the Commission must:

1. Periodically review available County public health programs, services, and facilities;
2. Comment on gaps, deficiencies, or duplication in County public health programs, services, and facilities;
3. Report each year to the County Executive on the performance of DHHS public health programs, actions needed to improve the programs, and the priorities within which the improvements should be made;
4. Comment on the proposed allocation of funds to County public health programs in accordance with the Department's priorities, considering the available financial resources and the need for health cost containment;
5. Advise on local public health planning needs;
6. Comment on the appropriateness of institutional health services proposed to be offered in the County and the metropolitan area by the private sector and nonprofit, state, or other public sector agencies;
7. Advise on the development of statewide criteria and standards for certificates of need and health planning, considering the regional impact when appropriate.
8. The Commission must report to and meet with the County Council, sitting as the County Board of Health, at least annually, on the programs and policies within its purview.

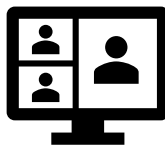
## Structure

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The Commission is comprised of 19 voting members with representation from consumers and providers of health services in the County. As dictated by County Code, the COH also has a representative from the Montgomery County Medical Society. In accordance with County Code the majority of the 19 commissioners were consumers with the balance being providers, including the Medical Society representative. The ex officio (non-voting) members of the COH include the County Health Officer and the County Council liaison. The COH continues to represent a diverse cross-section of Montgomery County residents.

Membership consisted of 16 members who were racially and ethnically diverse and vary in age, gender, geography and experience in health policy, public health, and the health care system.

The COH Chair and Vice Chair are elected by COH members and serve one-year terms. During FY23 Dr. Crystal DeVance- Wilson was the Chair of the Commission and Susan Emery was the Vice Chair.



## Meetings

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The COH meets at 6 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month (except in August). All meetings are open to the public. The COH met monthly via the virtual meeting platform Zoom during the 2023 fiscal year. The COH had one hybrid meeting, offering both in-person and virtual attendance, for the retreat September 15<sup>th</sup> 2022.

At a minimum, every member of the Commission is expected to either serve on one workgroup and, when possible, as a liaison to other health-related County boards, commissions, committees or minority health initiatives and programs.

With its broad perspective of public health, the COH recognizes the value of collaboration and communication with other health-related boards, commissions and committees. Many commissioners have an area of specialization, interest or constituency of public health and are therefore encouraged to serve as liaisons with other relevant health-related boards, commissions and committees (BCCs). Integral to this area of special interest is the constraint that all actions are in voice of the entire COH and not self-serving in any manner. Finally, members of the COH also served on committees that allowed the COH to conduct its business such as the membership, nominating and retreat planning committees. These committees require significant time and are in addition to the monthly scheduled meetings.

## **FY23 MEMBERSHIP**

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### **CONSUMER REPRESENTATIVES**

Jonathan Arias, PhD  
Alana Aronin, MPH  
Elliott Brown, MS  
Marcela Campoli, PhD, MHA  
Donna Cawley, MA  
Desiree de la Torre, MPH, MBA  
Susan Emery, MS  
Laurel Fain, MS  
Kendra Harris, MBA  
Gabriela Lemus, PhD  
Adam Lustig  
Cesar Perez, PhD  
Betty Smith

### **PROVIDER REPRESENTATIVES**

Yingxi Chen, MD, MPH, PhD  
Crystal DeVance-Wilson, PhD, MBA, PHCNS-BC

### **MEDICAL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVE**

Brent Berger, MD

### **EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)**

Dr. Kisha Davis, MD, MPH, FAAFP, Montgomery County Health Officer  
Tara Clemons, Legislative Analyst, Montgomery County Council

### **STAFF**

Robyn Simmons, MSA, Program Manager, DHHS  
Meghan Sontag, MS, MPH Program Manager, DHHS  
Felicia Hugee, MPH, PMP, Manager III, DHHS  
Magda Brown, Office Services Coordinator, DHHS

## MEET THE MEMBERS

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### **Jonathan Arias**

Jonathan received his M.S. at Purdue University and Ph.D. at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He is currently a Health Science Administrator at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, where he helps the organization identify and invest in transformative biomedical research efforts to improve human health. Prior to joining the NIH, he was a professor at the University of Maryland College Park where he studied protective biological responses to environmental toxins. He has served as a scientific expert on Federal advisory committees on food safety and human health and has a long record of service aimed at improving public education.

### **Alana Aronin**

Alana is President of Forte Group Consulting, a consulting firm specializing in public policy, community organizing, and public relations services for the broad range of public health interests. She has extensive experience in training advocates to create change at all levels of policy and building grassroots mobilizations to advance public health agendas. Alana has a MPH from The University of Michigan, and an undergraduate degree in Public Policy from James Madison College of Michigan State University.

### **Brent Berger**

Brent is an internist with Bethesda Medical Associates, a primary care practice with a focus on prevention and wellness. A native of Montgomery County, he has been practicing here since 1990, and is on the staff at Suburban Hospital. Brent received his BA from Johns Hopkins University and his MD from the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

### **Elliott Brown**

Elliott is George Washington University Hospital's Associate Administrator. In that role, he oversees support and ancillary services at the hospital. He received his Bachelor of Business Administration, with a minor in Public Health, from George Washington University and his Master of Science in Health Systems Administration from Georgetown University. Elliott also served as an EMT in Montgomery County for more than 10 years.

### **Marcela Campoli**

Marcela is the ANCC (American Nurse Credentialing Center) Director of the Institute for Credentialing Research and Quality Management, and Lead Coach and Member of Georgetown University's Bias Reduction Improvement Committee pursuing improved commitment against biases of all types and increased racial Equity. In the community, she serves as pro-bono President of Cares4Health's Board of Directors, an organization providing access to high-quality health care to immigrants and uninsured individuals in general. She holds a doctorate in health economics, a master's degree in health administration, and a baccalaureate degree in business administration (BBA). She is certified by the American Society of Quality as a Quality Improvement/Performance Manager, and completed a WHO/PAHO International Health residency.

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### **Donna Cawley**

Donna is committed to educating and advocating for residents of Montgomery County on health-related matters. She currently serves on the African American Health Program Executive Committee, which serves as an advisory body to the Department of Health and Human Services. She is an active member of her church's Health & Wellness Ministry; and her sorority's Emergency Response Team, which aided the county in the delivery of COVID-19 test kits and masks to homebound residents. Prior to relocating to Maryland, she served on the board of the Minority Health Coalition of LaPorte, Indiana, where she spearheaded an initiative to raise funds to cover the cost of mammograms for underserved women. Donna received her B.S. in Business from Indiana Wesleyan University and an M.A. in Law from Regent University.

### **Yingxi Chen**

Yingxi is a Medical Epidemiologist at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), where she works on large-scale linkage studies to understand health trends and risks. Yingxi has been working in the field of Public Health and Population Science for over 10 years. She holds a medical degree (M.D.), a Master of Public Health, and a doctorate degree in epidemiology.

### **Desiree de la Torre**

Desiree is the Director of Community Affairs and Population Health Improvement for Children's National Health System in Washington, DC. She leads the organization's population health improvement planning process, including support for community-based organizations, health equity, and compliance with federal community benefit regulations. She received a BS degree in Psychobiology from the University of California, Los Angeles, a MPH from Boston University, and a MBA from The Johns Hopkins University.

### **Crystal DeVance-Wilson**

Dr. Crystal DeVance-Wilson is a board-certified public health clinical nurse specialist with 30 years of experience working in acute and community settings with diverse populations. She is an Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland School of Nursing and Vice-Chair of the nursing department at the Universities at Shady Grove. She is also the Director of the Maryland Nursing Workforce Center which addresses issues affecting Maryland nurses, nursing students, schools of nursing, and healthcare organizations. Dr. DeVance-Wilson has held leadership positions in several community organizations and is also a member of several national organizations including the Association for Public Health Nurse Educators (ACHNE), American Public Health Association (APHA) and Sigma Theta Tau (STT). Dr. DeVance-Wilson's research interests include Black men's health, health policy and health disparities.

### **Susan Emery**

Susan is a retired engineer who worked in Computer Science and Telecommunications Management for 30 years. Fifteen years ago, she founded a Montgomery County nonprofit organization, Circle of Rights, Inc., dedicated to preventing stroke. Circle of Rights has presented in multiple languages on blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, healthy eating, and healthy living in public facilities throughout Montgomery County. Susan received a BS from Michigan State University and an MS from University of Maryland/University College.



## MEET THE MEMBERS

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### **Laurel Fain**

Laurel Fain (she/her) works for the United States Agency for International Development as a Foreign Service Officer. Her current role is Deputy Director of the Inclusive Development Hub, where she works to ensure that overseas investments by the U.S. Government promote inclusion and equity. Prior to this position she managed public health programs in developing countries throughout Africa and Asia. Laurel has served as a board member on several multinational health partnerships and an international school board. Laurel received her MS at the Harvard School of Public Health and her multidisciplinary undergraduate degree in Women's Health at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

### **Kendra Harris**

Kendra is a medical liaison where she is directly responsible for overseeing the development, coordination, and execution of The Living Legacy Foundations programmatic efforts to increase and raise awareness for organ, eye and tissue donation. Prior to joining The Living Legacy Foundation, she worked as a Licensed Funeral Director in Silver Spring, MD. Kendra received a B.S. in Biology from Norfolk State University, an A.S in Mortuary Science from Gupton Jones College of Funeral Service and an M.B.A. from the University of Maryland University College. She is committed to serving her community and advocating for the citizens of Montgomery County.

### **Gabriela Lemus**

Dr. Lemus is a passionate advocate for the Latinx community at the intersection of social justice and economic growth. Her career spans more than 15 years in senior strategic leadership roles in congressional and government affairs, non-profit management, policy advocacy and community/civic-engagement. She joined Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU) as the founding Executive Director in 2020 after launching – Revolution Strategy US - a management and communications strategy consultancy where she advised clients best practices for building multi-racial coalitions and advocacy campaigns, advancing public policy and civic engagement. In her first year as Executive Director of MLU, she also co-founded and administers the Mid-Atlantic Latinx Vaccine Equity Coalition (MALVEC). She is an innovator in voter engagement and civic participation for the Latino community.

### **Adam Lustig**

Mr. Lustig is a population health expert with experience leading and supporting advocacy, research, and partner building efforts to improve health and well-being in communities across the United States. He has served as a lead investigator, project director, strategist and analyst on a variety of projects designed to create, test, and advance evidence-based policies in health care, public health, and life sciences. Mr. Lustig has managed and supported multi-sector collaborative efforts for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Kaiser Permanente, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation and other philanthropic partners.

## MEET THE MEMBERS

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### **Cesar Perez**

Cesar Perez is the Director of the Division of Establishment Support, Office of Regulatory Programs (ORP), Office of Product Evaluation and Quality (OPEQ), Center for Devices and Radiological Health (CDRH) at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The Division is responsible for the development and implementation of policies and processes related to medical devices' imports, registration and listing, exports, regulatory inspections/audits and compliance programs. As the Director, he is responsible in providing strategic leadership for the Division and serves as the technical authority and principal advisor to the Office Director on medical devices programs. From 2015-2018, he was the Branch Chief of the Surveillance and Enforcement Branch I, Division of Premarket Labeling and Compliance, FDA, which is responsible for enforcing premarket requirements, as well as labeling and promotion/advertising requirements for medical devices. Cesar attended the State University of New York at New Paltz in 1998, and obtained his bachelor's degree in Biology. In 2008, he received his Ph.D. in Microbiology from New York University. Cesar served in the United States Army Reserve from 1998-2006 as a Non-Commissioned Officer. In 2003, he was activated and served one year on active duty at Fort Hood, Texas in support of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) operation. In 2009, Cesar joined the United States Public Health Service (USPHS,) and holds the rank of Commander (CDR).

### **Betty Smith**

Betty holds a BSc degree in Psychology from Howard University. Prior to attending Montgomery College, Takoma Park, MD, where she graduated with an Associate's Degree in Nursing, she administered Volunteer Services programs for the American Red Cross. Her Masters Degree is in Legal Studies. She has practiced as a Registered Nurse in the District of Columbia and Maryland as well as several states throughout the country in support of Clinical Hotline Telehealth Services provided by CVS/CARMARK. She has over 20 years of Nursing practice in Medical Surgical; Neuro/Brain Injury; Community Health; Medical Stroke; High Risk Postpartum; Infectious Disease and General Medicine.

## Commission on Health Priorities

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Following the Commission on Health Annual Retreat held September 15, 2022, the Commission set three priorities FY22:

- Access to Care
- Environmental Health and Education
- Public Health Administration

## Commission Correspondence

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The Commission on Health sent the following letters during Fiscal Year 2023:

- Letters (3) to the County Executive, December 2022, advocating to:
  - bolster the data collection capacity in the County and advocate for funding for a data coordinator for the Health Care for the Uninsured programs.
  - support the public health workforce
  - build capacity for providing environmental health and education to county residents
- Letter to the County Executive to support increasing access to care to meet the health needs of all residents more completely, February 2023.
- Letters (4) to County Council, March 2023, advocating to:
  - bolster the data collection capacity in the County by advocating for funding for a data coordinator for the Health Care for the Uninsured programs
  - support the public health workforce
  - build capacity for providing environmental health and education to county residents
  - increase access to care to more completely meet the health needs of all residents

## Commission on Health Testimonies

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The Commission on Health testified at the following forums:

- County Council HHS Committee Work Session for HHS Boards, Committees and Commissions on October 27, 2022.
- Presentation to the County Council sitting as the Board of Health on November 1, 2022.
- BCC Chairs meeting with HHS Director Dr. Raymond Crowel on January 26, 2023, to discuss COH priorities.

## Commission on Health Liaisons

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<b>Voluntary Advisory Groups</b>	<b>COH Member(s)</b>
African American Health Program (AAHP)	Crystal DeVance - Wilson
Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council	Yingxi Chen
Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI)	Yingxi Chen
Commission on Aging (COA)	Marcela Campoli
Commission on Children Youth and Families	Jonathan Arias
Commission on Homelessness	Laurel Fain
Commission on People with Disabilities (CPWD)	Susan Emery
Community Action Board	Betty Smith
Early Childhood Coordinating Council	Cesar Perez
Healthy Montgomery Steering Committee	Crystal DeVance - Wilson
Latino Health Initiative (LHI)	Marcela Campoli
Mental Health Advisory Committee	Donna Cawley
Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (PBTSAC)	Elliott Brown
School Health Council	Alana Aronin
Victim Services Advisory Board	Laurel Fain

## Commission on Health Committees

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### **Membership Committee**

Marcela Campoli  
Kendra Harris

### **Nominating Committee**

Marcela Campoli  
Desiree de la Torre

### **Retreat Planning Committee**

Crystal DeVance-Wilson  
Susan Emery  
Gabriela Lemus

## Commission on Health Workgroups

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### **Access to Care**

**Brent Berger\***, Alana Aronin, Desiree de la Torre, Donna Cawley, Betty Smith

### **Environmental Health and Education**

**Susan Emery**, Gabriela Lemus, Cesar Perez, Laurel Fain, Yingxi Cimo Chen

### **Public Health Administration**

**Marcela Campoli**, Jonathan Arias, Elliott Brown, Marcela Campoli, Adam Lustig, Tara Clemons Johnson

\*Workgroup leads in bold

## Commission on Health Workgroups Summary Reports

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### **Access to Care**

The Access to Care Workgroup was formed at the September 2022 COH Annual retreat to support increasing access to care to meet the health needs of all residents more completely. The workgroup advocated for the following five priorities:

- Growing the Healthcare Workforce to include underrepresented populations.
- Increasing quantity and quality of Healthcare Providers who accept Medicaid patients.
- Feasibility study for free standing public health clinics in Psychiatric/Mental Health, Perinatal (Obstetrics, Pediatric) and Geriatric care in underserved communities
- Public Relations Campaign to advertise existing initiatives and to promote recruitment, retention, and utilization of existing services of, for and by underserved communities.
- Ensure adequate access to produce "food is Medicine" by including weekday produce markets in areas designated as food deserts.

This workgroup shared their advocacy letter with the County Executive in December 2022 and with County Council in March 2023.

### **Environmental Health and Education**

In 2022, Montgomery County Commission created the Environmental Health Working Group to focus new light on the intersection of environmental and public health. Work Group members met with two of our sister Commissions: the Climate, Energy, and Air Quality Advisory Commission and the Water Quality Advisory Group, as well as with the Montgomery County Health Department to

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find synergies across our work as commissions. Our efforts focused on reviewing each Commissions' goals and objectives for 2022, to begin assessing, evaluating, and analyzing alignments that could potentially lead to collaborative efforts to mitigate climate change and its impacts on Montgomery County residents' health, thereby increasing community resilience.

To that effect, in December 2022, the Health Commission – on behalf of the Environmental Health Working Group - submitted several recommendations to County Executive Mark Ehrlich. To mitigate potential harm to County residents, the COH recommends the following actions be taken to raise awareness about environmental threats in Montgomery County, which include Temperature-Related death and illness; Extreme weather events, Air quality and water-related illness: Food safety and distribution; and Mental health and well-being.:

- Invest in establishing a dedicated environmental health workforce to include appropriate training to recognize and address the health impacts of environmental health threats.
- Assess the environmental health risks in Montgomery County using well established tools like the Maryland Environmental Screening Tool developed by the Center for Community Engagement, Environmental Justice, and Health (CEEJH) to identify sources of threats, prioritize communities at risk, and assess resource needs.
- Consider aligning activities, to the extent possible, with the Healthy People 2030 Environmental Health Objectives. These objectives are established using reliable measures and with the input of experts from across the country.
- Form strong and diverse partnerships which are key to helping our communities better understand and respond to environmental risk factors. Bringing together the combined experience, skills and resources of County government, community-based organizations, public health professionals, health care providers, and academic institutions to develop a comprehensive approach to a dissemination strategy that would reach all residents.

### **Public Health Administration**

The Public Health Administration workgroup of the Montgomery County Commission on Health (COH) identified advocacy as a key priority for 2023. They recognized the critical role of data in achieving fiscal accountability and emphasized its utilization to demonstrate the efficient use of funds. The workgroup prioritized data evaluation, management, analysis, and communication to inform decision-making processes and effectively address the county's evolving needs. They underscored the importance of making client data accessible, integrating existing data pockets, and establishing robust evaluation programs. Through their advocacy efforts, the Public Health Administration workgroup aimed to improve fiscal accountability, advocate for effective funding allocation, engage stakeholders, enhance data management practices, and ensure the long-term sustainability of programs targeting chronic diseases and community health.

## Montgomery County Commission on Health

Commission on Health  
1401 Rockville Pike  
2nd Floor  
Rockville, Maryland 20852

### WE'RE ON THE WEB!

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/PHS/CommOnHealth/COHIndex.html>



The Commission on Health was established on July 1, 1988. See chapter 23-24 of the Montgomery County Code for a description of the mission of the Commission on Health.



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Marc Elrich  
*County Executive*

Dr. James Bridgers  
*Director*

The County Executive and County Council encourage people who live or work in Montgomery County to become actively involved in matters affecting the quality of life in Montgomery County. Appointments are made to over 75 Boards, Committees, and Commissions by the County Executive, with confirmation by the County Council.

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/boards/index.html>