



Commission on People with Disabilities

January 14, 2026 - 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Tonya Gilchrist, Chair

Jamila Michael-Sobratti, Vice-Chair

Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

[Zoom Meeting Link](#)

Virtual Meeting Via Zoom: *If you want to call into the meeting, call 301-715-8592, use Meeting ID 739 001 7153 followed by #. Those calling into the meeting can press *6 to mute and unmute their phone. If an attendee would like to speak during the meeting, they must use the “hand raise” function. If connecting via a smart phone, tablet or computer, please click on the Zoom link to be able to access all functions, including raising your hand. If you are calling by phone, press *9 to raise your hand.*

Agenda

- 6:05 Call to Order & Approval of December 2025 Meeting Minutes – Tonya Gilchrist, Chair**
- 6:10 Inclusive Housing for People with Disabilities – Tim Wiens, Executive Director at Maryland Inclusive Housing Corporation (MIH), Silver Spring, Maryland**
- 6:55 Updates – Updates on FY27 Priorities for the Year – Commission and Ex-Officio Members**
Promote Greater Community Engagement and Inclusion of All People who Have a Disability
Greater Enforcement of Disability Laws: Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance, Fair Housing Act
- 7:20 Community Speaks – Public invited to make comments, 2-minute limit, time permitting. For profit companies who want to speak should contact the Commission in advance. The Open Meetings Act does not afford the public any right to participate in the meeting, it does assure the public right to observe the meeting and the making of decisions by the public body at open meetings. Public participants generally are not invited to speak during presentations and time is set aside at the end of the meeting to allow the public to speak. This policy will be strictly enforced moving forward.**
- 7:30 Adjourn**

ADA Reasonable Accommodations: Sign language interpreter services and other auxiliary aids or services will be provided upon request with as much advance notice as possible, preferably at least five (5) full business days before the meeting. To request any reasonable accommodation to participate in the meeting, please contact Carly Clem in advance at carly.clem@montgomerycountymd.gov or call 202-853-1109. In all situations, a good faith effort will be made to provide accommodations. For any additional questions or concerns, please contact Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison at betsy.luecking@montgomerycountymd.gov or please call 240-418-4865, MD Relay 711.

See Next Page for Top FY 27 Priorities



Commission on People with Disabilities

Meeting with Montgomery County Council HHS Committee

Top Policy Issues October 22, 2025

Tony Gilchrist, Chair

Promote Greater Community Engagement and Inclusion of All People who have a Disability

- Promote Greater Employment Opportunities for people with disabilities who want to work of all ages and who have all types of disabilities. OHR should continue to promote the Hiring preference for Veterans, Disabled Veterans and People with Disabilities and the County's non-competitive hiring initiative. At the same time, work with DORS and Worksource Montgomery to promote hiring in the private and public sectors.
- Encourage MCPS to implement more one on one family/student assessments of students who are marginalized or of immigrant populations in special education to access needed programs and resources. Promote avenues for greater parent advocacy.
- Continue to support the annual Development Disability supplement as it remains a cornerstone for providers who receive funding for services from the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) enabling them to sustain quality services and support for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). This funding ensures the provider community can navigate cost disparities and workforce challenges of recruiting and retaining Direct Support Professionals while meeting the evolving needs of the people they serve. The DDA FY 26 COLA rate adjustment for this year did not fully cover the extra cost of inflation. The DD supplement increases do not fully cover the cost of annual expansion of hundreds of new people who are newly admitted into services DD providers in the County, including Transitioning Youth who graduate from MCPS. DDA funding reductions have impacted providers, and it is not known how Medicaid will play out. Depending on what happens with Medicaid, DDA could have a major challenge supporting individuals with IDD.
- Increase funding of Respite and Caregiver Supports. Respite care is occasional, short-term temporary physical and emotional relief for families with adults with functional disabilities, children or adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, children with challenging behaviors, and frail seniors ages 60+. Caregiver supports promotes community engagement.

Greater Enforcement of Disability Laws: Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance, Fair Housing Act

- Transportation – Designated bike lanes and floating bus stops can present specific barriers, confusion, and danger to people who have low vision, blindness, hearing loss, mobility limitations or intellectual disabilities. Because there is not one standard design for floating bus stops, the issue should be studied for changes leading to consistency. Minimize or eliminate designated bike lanes and better monitoring of those installed by the state as they are confusing to the public such as Old Georgetown Road and Rock Spring Drive. Provide incentives to taxi drivers to drive accessible vehicles on a regular full-time basis. Greater police enforcement of accessible parking spaces/placards.
- Funding for new and innovative assistive listening devices such as Auracast broadcast audio which is a new Bluetooth capability to enhance hearing accessibility.
- Promote programs that increase the amount of accessible and affordable housing – Such as: Design for Life Montgomery, encourage the building and renovation of accessible homes. Seek legislation for the County to adopt the Prince Georges Universal design Bill CB-085-2024 AN ACT CONCERNING UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR HOUSING - REVISIONS generally regarding Universal Design elements for certain newly constructed residential homes.

- Implementation of property tax credit for people with a disability that is in Montgomery County Code, **ARTICLE X. PROPERTY TAX CREDIT** [ARTICLE X. PROPERTY TAX CREDITS](#) **Sec. 52-84. Real property tax credits for permanently and totally disabled homeowners.**

Lastly, it is critical for Boards, Committees and Commissions (BCC) have commissioners appointed in a timely manner so that they can be most effective and also respecting the volunteer service of community members who serve. We ask that the County ensure proper staffing for the County Executive's Office for timely recruitment and appointments of BCC members.



**Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Minutes
January 14, 2026**

Meeting Location

Held virtually via Zoom.

Call To Order

Tonya Gilchrist, Chair, called the meeting to order.

Meeting Agenda Items

1. Inclusive Housing for People with Disabilities – Tim Wiens, Executive Director at Maryland Inclusive Housing Corporation (MIH)

[Maryland Inclusive Housing website](#)

[Tim reviewed a PowerPoint presentation.](#)

Questions and comments during the presentation.

- MIH has partnered with the Maryland 250 Commission to celebrate inclusive history in our state. They have launched a digital storytelling initiative that uplifts underrepresented voices and explores Maryland's rich, complex history. As part of this effort, MIH facilitated a virtual podcast roundtable focused on the evolution of inclusive housing for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in Maryland. MIH was able to secure an expert panel with a deep and diverse knowledge of inclusive housing in Maryland. [As you listen to this podcast, you'll find out why we "Can't Go Back!"](#). Panel includes Cathy Raggio, former Secretary for the Maryland Department of Disabilities; Steve Eidelman, Executive Director of the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr., Foundation; and Tracy Wright, Deputy Director and director of training at People on The Go.
- Does MIH have the funding to support more individuals? With the potential for upcoming budget cuts, how will MIH increase funding for this program? As of January 2026, there are approximately 35 individuals leased statewide through the DDA Rent Subsidy Program. Projected funding is for at least 50 individuals total. It is unlikely that this program will be cut and probably unlikely that the funding will be increased next year. This program has only really gotten off the ground in the last 9 to 10 months and has been going smoothly.
 - On Jan. 28, Maryland Inclusive Housing (MIH), in partnership with Del. Jennifer White Holland, will host a Legislative Lunch at St. Anne's Parish (199 Duke of Gloucester St.) in Annapolis focused on the importance of affordable housing for Marylanders with disabilities. The event will begin at 12 noon. The Legislative Lunch will convene legislators, advocates, community partners, and Marylanders with IDD to introduce MIH's 2026 State Legislative Agenda and foster meaningful dialogue around inclusive housing policy. Affordable housing is a priority for Governor Wes Moore and Jacob Day, Secretary of Maryland Department of Housing and Community Affairs.
 - New housing subsidy for vulnerable populations including people with disabilities, veterans, and chronic homelessness. Subsidy would be state funded only due to shrinking federal resources.

- Delegate Emily Shetty, Montgomery County District 18, is Chair of the Health and Human Services Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, is a supporter of developmental disability issues.
- Tim can share materials with Betsy Luecking, Staff, to distribute to Commissioners. They can use this information to advocate as private citizens.
- How large is the current waiting list for the DDA Rent Subsidy Program? It is approximately 300 statewide. Applicants are prioritized for the program in the following order: currently receiving state funds from the DDA for rent; homeless or at risk of homelessness; transitioning from a long-term care facility or institution; living with a caregiver who is age 55 or older or who is no longer able to care for the applicant; transitioning from a group home, shared living or foster care; all other eligible applicants 18 years of age and participating in one of the DDA waiver programs with a housing support goal). [More information about the program and eligibility requirements](#).
- The Commission is focused on housing for all people with disabilities. Are there programs to keep people in existing housing? MIH's mission is focused on developmental disabilities and does not work individually with people who do not have a developmental disability but the resource page and assistive technology navigator is cross-disability and offers information for individuals beyond developmental disabilities. MIH's advocacy efforts are also cross-disability.
- MIH spoke with Karen Leggett, Transition Services, about offering housing support services to ineligible developmental disability individuals on a private pay basis to help individuals transitioning by developing a plan and assisting them to get on a waiting list. This would help expand MIH's funding base. Cost would be \$100 an hour for a minimum for five hours.
- Tim will share MIH's proposal with Commissioners that was sent to County Executive Marc Elrich. MIH has already started discussions with several members of the County Council. MIH's goal is to partner with affordable housing developers to create affordable housing units, especially for individuals with developmental disabilities. MIH is proposing 10% or less of units set aside.
- MIH is mostly funded through grants from the Maryland Medicaid DDA Waiver and Money Follows the Person.
- The Commission has sent letters to the County Executive and County Council asking the County to adopt universal design legislation similar to what Prince George's County has enacted. MIH is familiar with Prince George's County's legislation and the potential it could provide for MIH's interests. Tim asked that the Commission's letter be sent to him for review. There is a real lack of understanding from developers regarding the cost benefit.
- When does the MIH Committee meet? The Committee meets every other month. It was suggested that a Commissioner attend those meetings.

2. Updates on FY27 Priorities for the Year

Pedestrian Safety and Transportation Issues

Francie Gilman, former Commissioner, attended a Road Safety Town Hall sponsored by Evan Glass. Panelists included representatives from the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), Montgomery County Police Department and County officials. Francie asked about the responsibility and follow up to the Pedestrian Master Plan and was told that is a Montgomery Planning Board issue. Pat Sheehan and Susan Crawford were also in attendance.

Cindy LaBon, Commissioner, attended and reported that the friends and family members of the two children who were recently killed were in attendance. The panelists did not discuss floating bus stops. Channel 5 interviewed Cindy and several others and took pictures of Bethesda Avenue and Woodmont Road where the Braille is marked incorrectly. Cindy reported that several audible pedestrian signals are turned off, specifically on Diamondback Drive and Muddy Branch Road near where she lives. The crosswalk buttons also have the directional arrows installed incorrectly and not facing in the right directions. Cindy noted that due to the bus shelters on Montgomery Village Avenue the sidewalk is not wide enough to accommodate individuals who use scooters or wheelchairs. She added that several individuals who had their hands raised during the town hall were not called or recognized.

Betsy asked Commissioners how to approach pedestrian safety issues moving forward given that this Commission has addressed their concerns and sent several letters to the County Executive, County Council and MCDOT with no response. The American Council for the Blind has the authority to write the Governor as well as the County Executive and County Council to address these issues. The Commission can write to the Governor only if they receive permission from the Office of Intergovernmental Relations.

It was suggested that the Commission form a Pedestrian Safety and Transportation Committee to meet every month. Betsy reported that the SHA received a petition signed by 10,000 individuals from neighborhoods along Old Georgetown Road that were against installing designated bike lanes. SHA needs to be asked if they considered what the neighborhood wanted or the concerns of people with disabilities before installing the designated bike lanes. The intersection near Walter Johnson High School is particularly confusing as drivers cannot determine which lane is the road and which lane is the bike lane.

Matt Barkley, ADA Title II Compliance, Department of General Services, said the ADA Compliance Team partners with MCDOT on sidewalk issues or APS being inaccessible. There needs to be more overlap between the two departments. There are no ADA standards regarding floating bus stops which is why they are different in every jurisdiction. Betsy suggested contacting the U.S. Access Board. The Commission may also need to work with other Commissions across the state. It was suggested also including the National Federation of the Blind and Independence Now.

Seth Morgan, former Chair, noted that he wrote many letters to MCDOT regarding pedestrian safety during his 13 years on the Commission. He also approached different County Councilmembers to get support, but nothing was done. Betsy reported that she and Seth met with the Montgomery Planning Board years ago to discuss pedestrian safety issues.

Francie said the argument made by MCDOT is that they don't see people with disabilities using the floating bus stops but if they cannot access them safely that is why they are not using them. It is also an employment issue if a person with a disability cannot safely use a bus or MetroAccess to get to their place of employment.

Deborah Rozzell, Commissioner, reported that students from the University of Maryland Urban Studies and Planning department take on research projects in the community as part of their studies. Students held community meetings with their recommendations. She suggested that students become involved in these issues to address pedestrian safety concerns.

It was suggested that the Commission hold a public hearing on these issues and develop a strategy plan to be more effective. Rebecca Murphy, Commissioner, also serves on the City of Rockville's Human Rights Commission and noted that having a large number of community members attend community meetings with an organized response has been very effective.

Betsy will share elected officials email addresses with Commissioners so they can contact him as private citizens.

The County Council has submitted a resolution to approve a Special Appropriation to the FY26 Operating Budget: Respite Care Program, \$250,000; Senior Nutrition Program, \$450,000; and Homecare Services - Social Services to Adults, \$300,000. A public hearing will be held on January 27. A motion was made for the Commission to submit testimony to support the resolution. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

Patricia Cochrane, Montgomery County Public Schools, shared an [article from xMinds](#) with Commissioners prior to the meeting that details cuts to autism services.

Review and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

A motion was made to approve the December 2025 Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the December 2025 Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved as written. [Approved minutes are available on the Commission's website.](#)

Updates – Ex-Officio Members, Commission Members

Tabled due to time constraints.

Next Meeting

The next full Commission Meeting is Wednesday February 11, 2026 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and will be held virtually via Zoom.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Attendance

Voting Members Present

- Azeb Adere
- Shameen Anthanio-Williams
- Jennifer Berzok
- Tonya Gilchrist
- Karen Goss
- Tria Gray
- Leslie Green Lyles
- Cindy LaBon
- Ricardo Lopez
- Jamila Michael-Sobratti
- Rebecca Murphy
- Deborah Rozell
- Teresa Villani
- John Whittle

Voting Members Absent

- Mary Simons
- Christopher Sinsheimer

Ex-Officio Non-Voting Members Present

- Matthew Barkley, Department of General Services
- Jennene Blakely, Montgomery Parks
- Pat Cochrane, Montgomery County Public Schools
- Denise Isreal, Department of Transportation
- Elizabeth Lang, Department of Libraries
- Angela Luskey, Department of Recreation

Ex-Officio Non-Voting Members Absent

- Rebecca Grayson, Housing Opportunities Commission
- Candace Groudine, Human Rights Commission

Commission Staff Present

- Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison, Community Outreach Manager
- Carly Clem, Staff Support, Program Specialist II

Other County Staff Present

- Mansi Gonsalia, Legislative Analyst, County Council

Public Attendees

- Bethany Peacock, Sign Language Interpreter
- Tyler Folster, Sign Language Interpreter
- Seth Morgan, former Chair
- Cindy Buddington, former Commissioner
- Francie Gilman, former Commissioner
- Karen Morgret, Treatment & Learning Centers

Guest Speakers

- Tim Wiens, Executive Director at Maryland Inclusive Housing Corporation