

**APPROVED JANUARY 25, 2022**

Montgomery County Community Action Board  
Virtual Meeting  
November 30, 2021

**MINUTES**

**CAB Members in Attendance:** Valerie Chatfield-Smith, Lisa Conlon, Erika Conner, Lisette Orellana Engel, Candace Groudine, Jeffery Johnson, Tiffany Jones, Will Kenlaw, Danette Lawrence, Agnes Leshner, Mike Subin, and Zelda Wafer-Alonge

**CAB Members Absent:** Ron Jennings, Pamela Lockett, Myriam Paul, and Timothy Robinson

**CAA Staff:** Sharon Strauss, Charlene Muhammad, Aizat Oladapo, and Leah Goldfine

**Guests:** Brandy Naughton, Ed.D., Benita Rashaw, PhD, and Schai Schairer

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 6:06 pm.

**Consent Agenda**

Mike moved to approve the consent agenda. Agnes seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The consent agenda included the minutes from the October 2021 CAB meeting; October 2021 meeting evaluations summary; Executive Director's Report; Head Start report; Contracts report; Staff Liaison's report; CAI workshop evaluation results summary; CAB testimony for Council Bill 38-21, Council Bill 42-21, and Joint Delegation Hearing; CAB report for DHHS BCC quarterly meetings; CAB letter of support for CAFB policy recommendations; CSBG budget modification charts for FY21 and FY22; CAA Budget Summary for October 2021; VITA report; TESS report; Waiver request determination from the Ethics Commission; and Montgomery College Grant Application materials.

**CAB Updates**

Sharon provided an update on the Ethics Commission waiver request for Tiffany. Tiffany had submitted a waiver request to the Commission due to a potential conflict of interest between her position on the CAB and her paid position as the BASICS Coordinator. Tiffany submitted meeting minutes, CAB bylaws, a personal statement, and the Commission spoke with CAA staff and reviewed a DHHS statement recommending that the waiver be granted. The Commission ultimately determined that Tiffany's request should be granted. While there were conflict of interest issues, many of these issues were moot since the CAB no longer had governing authority over the BASICS program, which would now be housed in Early Childhood Services and would not be funded through Head Start.

Following this review of the Ethics Commission determination to grant Tiffany a waiver, Tiffany was installed as the CAB Chair for FY22.

Two guests from Montgomery College, Brandy Naughton, Ed.D. and Benita Rashaw, PhD, spoke about a grant for which the College is applying. They explained that the program started with the Capital Area Food Bank to offer food to all people in need in the College community – with no eligibility requirements. This led to a more extensive program, the Student Health and Wellness (SHaW) Center, to address other non-academic barriers that prevent students from achieving academic success and graduating. The SHaW Center addresses food insecurity, mental health issues, health and safety, physical health, and other important issues facing students. The grant the College is applying for is through the U.S. Department of Education Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Program. Funds would support staffing, emergency needs, and connecting students with services at the SHaW Center. The Center was hoping to have the CAB’s support for its application. A question was asked about the Center’s collaboration with Future Link. Dr. Naughton and Dr. Rashaw indicated that they are hoping to build their relationship with the organization and other similar organizations that can support students.

Following the presentation, Lisa moved to support Montgomery College’s application for a grant through the U.S. Department of Education Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Program. Zelda seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The board would submit a letter of support to be included in the College’s grant application.

Staff reported that Erika had testified on behalf of the CAB at a recent hearing for County Council Bill 42-21, which would establish an early education coordinating entity at a nonprofit. The CAB’s testimony included recommended amendments that would require the entity to focus more attention on the needs of lower-income residents. Board members received the testimony as part of their meeting materials.

Staff noted that a new County Council redistricting map was in the process of being approved. Staff would arrange a special briefing about the new map and would invite CAI participants and graduates to attend.

The CAB discussed the format of meetings moving forward. Due to ongoing concerns about COVID-19, the board decided to remain all-virtual through April 2022.

### **Executive Director’s Report**

In addition to her written report, Sharon updated the board on the agency’s CSBG adjustment for FY21 and FY22. The agency received a small increase, which will be allocated for salaries for FY21. The increase for FY22 will be allocated for supplies and materials. Mike moved to approve the proposed CSBG adjustments for FY21 and FY22. Jeffery seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

Sharon reported that the agency will soon complete its annual CSBG Organizational Standards Report. The agency will need to respond to nine areas of Organizational Standards that apply to public CAAs. The agency must state whether or not it met each Standard and provide back-up documentation. Sharon provided an overview of the nine categories the agency would be addressing.

Sharon updated the board on preparations for the VITA tax season and EITC outreach. Staff from the County Executive's Office have been in touch and would like to increase EITC outreach this year due to expansions of the Maryland EITC and the County's Working Families Income Supplement. The County budget includes additional funding to ensure that the WFIS is a 100% match of the state EITC. A meeting was scheduled in December with the County Executive's team and VITA partners to discuss the tax season and how outreach would be conducted this year.

Sharon noted that the agency had not received the American Rescue Plan Act funds that were promised to the VITA program. Board members recommended sending a letter to the County Council to follow up and requesting a meeting to discuss the funds.

The agency's four Navigators are participating in training and shadowing TESS staff to better understand County resources. Sharon also noted that TESS staff members were playing a critical role in helping victims of the Rockville flood.

Staff participated in a special presentation with the members of the Maryland Community Action Partnership to discuss the Self-Sufficiency Standard. The SSS was compared with ALICE and participants learned about how the SSS is used for CAB advocacy. The hope is that MCAP members will be interested in providing funding to update the SSS this year.

### **Head Start**

In addition to her written report, Charlene reported that the annual Head Start Stakeholders Recruitment and Registration Meeting was held that morning. A lot of great ideas about how to expand outreach and recruitment were shared at the meeting.

Charlene noted that the state recently released information about its vision for PreK through its Blueprint for Maryland's Future. These recommendations will have a significant impact on the County's PreK landscape.

Lisa provided an update on Head Start/PreK registration and new staffing.

### **Contracts**

In addition to her written report, Aizat noted that there were over 40 participants at the annual Contract Partners' Meeting and the meeting went very well.

Recently, several of the agency's partner organizations have had turnover. They are working to address this and prevent disruptions in service delivery.

Aizat reported that she and Melissa will soon complete monitoring visits with our partners.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 pm.