

APPROVED APRIL 22, 2025

Montgomery County Community Action Board
Virtual Meeting
March 25, 2025

MINUTES

CAB Members in Attendance: Beverly Coleman, Lisa Conlon, Erika Conner, Luz Cuenca, Denise Fredericks, Jeffery Johnson, Will Kenlaw, Evelyn Okutu, DaVida Rowley, Claudia Simmons, Mike Subin, Timothy Robinson, Kemmesha Thomas, and Helen Winder

CAB Members Absent: Rachel Bonas, Summer Cook, and Pamela Lockett

CAA Staff: Shantá Johnson, Charlene Muhammad, and Leah Goldfine

Guests: Will Hegwood, Joseph Hooks, Tiffany Jones, and Kimberly Rusnak

Call to Order: The meeting was officially called to order at 6:08 pm.

Consent Agenda

Timothy moved to approve the consent agenda and Mike seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The consent agenda included the minutes and evaluations summary from February 2025 CAB meeting; Executive Director's Report; Head Start Report; Contracts Report; Staff Liaison's Report; Budget report and P Card update; TESS and Navigation reports; VITA report; CAB legislation tracking list; CAB testimony in support of County Council Bill 5-25: Demolition Tax for Affordable Housing Production and SB859- Fair Share for Maryland Act of 2025; Children's Opportunity Alliance Common Agenda; and Children's Opportunity Alliance Handout – Current Early Childhood Education Landscape

Children's Opportunity Alliance Presentation

Will Hegwood, Joseph Hooks, Tiffany Jones, and Kimberly Rusnak led a presentation and discussion about the Children's Opportunity Alliance. The organization has been examining information and data in the County to determine what childcare and educational opportunities are available for children five and under. They shared a document with the CAB that provided a detailed look at the various options and available spots in County programs. The COA aims to improve ECE options and has developed a Common Agenda that includes a list of key priorities with kindergarten readiness being the ultimate goal. According to the Common Agenda, these are the priority factors that support or impede our result and that our strategies will address:

- Access to high-quality, affordable early care and education (ECE)
- Increased retention, pay, and benefits for ECE workforce
- Parent/Guardian education and engagement
- Public awareness and political will that prioritizes the early childhood system

The COA conducted several community conversations in developing the document, which also includes strategies and key activities to address the concerns listed above.

The COA is hoping to partner with groups like the CAB. They are developing a Parent Ambassadors program that may be of interest to CAI graduates and residents served by organizations represented on our board.

CAB Updates

Board members received a detailed written report from the staff liaison with updates on the board's work since the last meeting, along with a legislation tracking form and the CAB's recent testimony. Staff noted the board's advocacy work during the legislative session. Staff thanked the board members who had participated in the two CAI testimony practice sessions earlier in the month.

Dr. Johnson and Kemmesha spoke about their experiences at the National Community Action Foundation's conference in Washington, D.C., which also included meetings with members of the Maryland Congressional Delegation. They shared that the experience was very empowering. A key takeaway from the conference was that we need to focus on our "champions" in Congress – those who will continue to support CSBG and Head Start.

Executive Director's Update

Board members received a detailed Executive Director's report with updates on the agency's programs, along with program reports from TESS, Navigation, and VITA, and budget and P Card reports. Shantá shared that we are in the midst of budget season and had just submitted our responses to County Council questions. This year and beyond, Shantá hopes to focus on service integration and trauma-informed care within the agency.

Shantá noted that the last day for VITA appointments would be April 10th. For TESS, they are restarting some of their partnerships with community groups/organizations.

Head Start Update

Board members received a detailed written Head Start report with updates on the program. Charlene shared that the program is in flux right now. The current grant ends June 30th but we have not received an update on the new grant application, although the federal government is paneling applications now. The program is moving forward with plans for the next school year but is prepared to pivot if necessary.

Enrollment for SY2025-2026 is underway, with MCPS receiving 1,475 applications so far. A third Judy Center will open at Weller Road soon and will include a three-year-old class.

Contracts

Board members received a detailed written report only with updates on the agency's contract and grant partners.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:06 pm.

