

Montgomery Cares Advisory Board

September 24, 2025 Meeting Notes

MCAB Members Present: Dr. Kathryn Kelly (Chair), Mark Foraker (Vice Chair), Kate McGrail, Kate Lu, Denise Kishel, Dr. Khalfani Walker, Dr. Deborah Miller-Young, Dr. Kisha Davis, Leslie Richin, Vahe Hovian, Karen Crist

MCAB Members Absent: Wayne Swann

DHHS Staff: Ashley Miller, Melinda Fredericks, Iye Kanu, Dawnn Williams, Dr. Tricia Boyce, Rebecca Smith, Dr. Nina Ashford

County Council Staff: Tara Clemons Johnson, Diana Carillo

Primary Care Coalition: Sarah Frazell, Veronica Vela, Okeke Ogechukwu, Wenjing Zhang, Annice Cody, Marisol Ortiz, Tefo Linchwe

Guest: Luisa Cardona, Marc Elrich, Dr. Troy Jacobs, Kate Stewart, Kathy Stevens

Dr. Kathryn Kelly, called the meeting to order at 4:13 pm. Meeting held in 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, Conference Rooms A&B with a virtual option

Item		Action Follow-up	Person Assigned	Due Date
1.	Approval of Minutes – July 23, 2025 Dr. Kathryn Kelly <i>Moved by Mark Foraker</i> <i>Seconded by Denise Kishel</i> <i>The motion was passed unanimously.</i>			
2.	Montgomery Cares Advisory Board Chair Report Dr. Kathryn Kelly Dr. Kelly reviewed the agenda and outlined the arrangements for the in-person panel discussion. Announcements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BCC Meeting with HHS Committee: The HHS Committee of the Montgomery County Council will hold its annual BCC priorities meeting on October 22nd and 23rd. Dr. Kelly will represent MCAB at the meeting and will read a priority statement outlining MCAB’s top priorities for each of the Health Care for the Uninsured Programs for the coming year. During the subcommittee report out section of the agenda, each subcommittee was asked to select one priority for their program to be featured in the statement. Selections are noted in that section of the minutes. Dr. Kelly and Mark will develop the statement, which will be submitted to County Council on October 15. MCAB will take a vote to formally approve the statement at the October meeting and will have an opportunity to provide any additional feedback to Dr. Kelly ahead of the meeting. 	Provide a copy of the HHS Committee Priority Statement	Ashley Miller	Prior to MCA B October Meeting

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCC Update: The use of AI notetaking tools and Microsoft Teams Chat is prohibited during MCAB meetings. • Membership Update: Overview of current membership status and pending appointments. Dr. Yuchi Huang has stepped down from the Board. The MCAB thanks Dr. Huang for his many contributions to the Board and the residents of Montgomery County! • Introduction – Annice Cody: A formal introduction was provided for Annice Cody, the new Chief Executive Officer of the Primary Care Coalition. Ms. Cody has extensive experience in the Montgomery County healthcare community. She shared PCC’s priorities under her leadership, emphasizing a continued focus on communication, collaboration, and leveraging technology to enhance organizational efficiency. 			
3.	<p>Health Officer Update Dr. Kisha Davis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Health Officer Report was distributed with the meeting packet. No additional comments or questions were raised on the report. • Dr. Nina Ashford reported that the Public Health Services Division is developing an electronic health system to collect and analyze data on community healthcare needs. The goal is to consolidate data across all county-operated programs and establish a comprehensive metrics framework. The systems Dr. Cloud and Denture are currently in use, and a new initiative titled the “Community Connect Portal” is under development. This platform aims to centralize eligibility information across all DHHS programs, making it easier for residents to access services. • Dr. Kisha Davis provided updates on respiratory disease activity in the county. The CDC recommends the COVID-19 vaccine for all individuals aged six months and older, with dosage varying by age group. Seniors and individuals with underlying health conditions are strongly encouraged to receive the vaccine. She noted ongoing accessibility challenges and mentioned that the department may soon receive a supply of RSV vaccines for children. Dr. Davis also addressed recent misinformation linking Tylenol use to autism, clarifying that this claim is not supported by research or clinical evidence. She urged members to guide the public using science-based and evidence-backed information, emphasizing the crucial role that Montgomery Cares clinics play as trusted sources of health education in the community. • Finally, Dr. Davis noted that the department will be issuing guidance on the rights of community members facing immigration enforcement, ensuring residents are aware of available protections and resources. 			
4.	<p>Health Care for the Uninsured Report Q&A DHHS Staff</p> <p>No questions for DHHS Staff re: September Healthcare for the Uninsured Report</p> <p>Dr. Kelly shared that the increases noted for Healthcare for the Homeless in the report reflect the changes in staffing, including a nurse practitioner for increased hours for patient care and follow-up. The nurse practitioner spends 20 hours weekly at Nebel, which is the largest shelter location each week. This effort has also contributed to a decrease in 911</p>			

	calls and hospital readmissions from various shelter locations. Also, there has been an increase in homeless individuals, and the numbers at the Progress Place location have increased substantially.			
5.	<p>Nominating Committee: Announcement of Chair and Vice Chair Nominations and Vote Nominating Committee</p> <p>FY26 Announcement of Nominating Committee, Chair and Vice Chair Election</p> <p>The FY26 Nominating Committee is made up of board members Kate McGrail, Karen Crist and Wayne Swann.</p> <p>The Nominating Committee announced the nominees for the FY26 Chair and Vice Chair positions. Several candidates were identified, each briefly sharing their reasons and interest for serving. The slate of nominees was presented for a vote.</p> <p>Chair and Vice Chair Nominees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Kathryn Kelly – Dr. Kelly, who operates her own medical practice and serves on the Healthcare for the Homeless subcommittee, has served effectively as Chair and expressed her willingness to continue in the role. • Mark Foraker – Mark, Executive Director of Mercy Clinic, is currently serving as the Vice Chair and is in his second term on the MCAB. He also serves as Chair of the MCares subcommittee and is on the Healthcare Leadership Council. He expressed enthusiasm for continuing his service and contributing to the Board’s leadership. <p>Additional Remarks: Kate McGrail provided an overview of the timeline and nomination and voting process. Karen Crist introduced the nominees and provided an overview of the roles and responsibilities associated with the Chair and Vice Chair positions. During the October 22, 2025 meeting MCAB will vote to select Chair and Vice Chair virtually from the nominees presented.</p> <p>Motion: A motion to accept the nominations was made to confirm the slate of nominees for Chair and Vice Chair positions.</p> <p><i>Moved by Denise Kishel</i> <i>Seconded by Huixing Lu</i></p> <p><i>The motion was passed unanimously</i></p>	Chair and Vice Chair Voting instructions to board members	Ashley Miller	Prior to and during the October MCA B Meeting
6.	<p>Board Representative Updates MCAB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Needs Assessment: Kate McGrill reported that the Community Needs Assessment has been completed and is currently pending approval from a partner hospital. The final report is expected to be published in early 2026. 			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Montgomery County Medical Society: Dr. Kelly shared that outreach efforts have begun to local safety-net clinics to explore opportunities for specialty care referrals. She also highlighted that the Montgomery County Medical Society has provided over 200 free mammogram screenings and facilitated 14 diagnostic mammograms and biopsies for community members in need.			
7.	<div><div>Healthcare for the Uninsured Panel Discussion</div><div>Mark Foraker</div></div> <p>Topic: Addressing the Healthcare Needs of Uninsured Residents in Montgomery County</p> <p>Duration: 60 minutes Facilitator: <i>Mark Foraker, MCAB Vice Chair</i></p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Honorable Marc Elrich</i> – Montgomery County Executive• <i>Kate Stewart</i> – Montgomery County Council President• <i>Dr. Nina Ashford</i> – Chief, Montgomery County Public Health Services <p>MCAB hosted a 60-minute panel discussion featuring county leaders and public health experts to share insights on addressing healthcare needs for uninsured residents in Montgomery County. Panelists discussed systemic challenges, local innovations, and strategies for advancing health equity. Their input will help inform MCAB’s priorities for FY27.</p>	Email additional questions to Ashley Miller	MCAB	Prior to October MCAB Meeting
	<p>1. Question for County Executive Marc Elrich</p> <p>Topic: <i>Federal restrictions on safety-net supports and immigrant services.</i></p> <p>Question: <i>The Federal Government has removed safety net supports across the country and has begun to implement policies that create barriers for immigrants receiving help locally. The proposed measures focus on individuals and families by jeopardizing their immigration status and other policies have sought to punish nonprofits and local jurisdictions and their leaders, including proposed jail-time. Faced with budget constraints, what interventions are you prioritizing over the next 12—18 months to address the changes? What acts of resistance is the County prepared to implement to ensure the safety of our residents and the continuation of health equity in our communities?</i></p> <p>Responses:</p>			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Executive Elrich highlighted his experience serving seven years as County Executive and ten years on the County Council. He emphasized the importance of maintaining fiscal responsibility while meeting community needs. Montgomery County’s property tax rate remains lower than neighboring jurisdictions, and the County’s budget outlook is healthy, with no immediate pressure for reductions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ He acknowledged the difficulty of balancing support for immigrant communities amid potential federal penalties but reaffirmed the County’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. ○ The County increasingly relies on community partners and nonprofits to extend its reach—for example, the Lighthouse Program, which coordinates with multiple nonprofit organizations. ○ He noted plans to increase reimbursement rates for Montgomery Cares clinics, recognizing nonprofits’ effectiveness and community trust in delivering essential services. • Council President Kate Stewart shared that MCPS has developed safety plans for families and provides guidance in areas with heightened immigration enforcement activity, particularly in Takoma Park, Long Branch, and Silver Spring. • Dr. Nina Ashford added that the County Executive’s office and County Council remain united in supporting public health and community-based initiatives. • Facilitator Mark Foraker expressed appreciation for the panelists’ perspectives and commitment on this question. 			
	<p>2. Question for Dr. Nina Ashford</p> <p>Topic: <i>Maintaining evidence-based health guidance and vaccine access.</i></p> <p>Question: <i>The Federal Government has begun moving away from using evidence-based medicine and long established processes for providing public health guidance, including vaccine recommendations. There are States and regions across the United States forming collaborations to fill this void such as California, Washington and Oregon. What do you propose as a local response to ensure that the community continues to get accurate, evidence-based guidance and what do you see as barriers to a localized and / or regional approaches? Additionally, insurance companies have begun denying covid vaccinations to individuals that do not fall within the updated eligibility criteria. Is there discussion at the County or State level to attempt to mitigate this impact and / or pressure insurers to continue coverage regardless of Federal guidelines?</i></p> <p>Responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Ashford emphasized that Maryland’s strong public health policies continue to protect residents. Since July 1, state legislation requires insurers to cover vaccines as before, ensuring continued accessibility. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Public Health Division will persist in providing evidence-based information, regardless of misinformation circulating on social media, and will rely on trusted community partners to reinforce science-based education. 			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ She noted that although the department administered fewer back-to-school vaccines this year, MCPS vaccination rates remain consistent, underscoring the value of collaboration with local nonprofits. ○ Insurers generally prefer to cover preventive vaccines rather than face higher costs from advanced disease treatment. • Council President Stewart added that leaders must continue to be a “broken record”—repeating clear, consistent messaging about vaccine safety, especially for new parents who may experience doubt. • Facilitator Mark Foraker expressed appreciation for the panelists’ perspectives and commitment on this question. 			
	<p>3. Question for Council President Kate Stewart</p> <p>Topic: <i>Expanding behavioral health access and reducing stigma.</i></p> <p>Question: It is extremely challenging to access mental health supports with health insurance. Barriers typically include cost, provider shortages and extreme levels of stigma, especially prevalent among many cultures and immigrant groups. What short-term and long-term solutions do you hope to see implemented as a way of mitigating the behavioral health access challenges among safety net populations in the County. What do you see as the primary barriers to those solutions? What do you see as goals for destigmatizing behavioral health access in our community and what would you like to accomplish in the immediate future?</p> <p>Responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council President Stewart stated that mental health remains a core County priority. Over 100 stakeholders and providers have collaborated to assess needs and strengthen service delivery. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ She stressed the importance of building on community strengths and connecting providers to improve efficiency. ○ Ongoing initiatives include public awareness campaigns, such as short videos highlighting available resources and culturally tailored outreach to communities like the Ethiopian population in District 4. ○ The County is also expanding school-based mental health programs to normalize mental wellness conversations early in life. ○ She cited successful examples such as mobile health clinics integrating behavioral health services and the planned LGBTQ resource center, designed to offer safe spaces and accessible care amid growing hostility nationwide. • County Executive Elrich added that funding community mental health facilities and safety-net clinics remains one of the most effective ways to meet behavioral health needs across the county. • Facilitator Mark Foraker expressed appreciation for the panelists’ perspectives and commitment on this question. 			

	<p>4. Question for All Panelists</p> <p>Topic: <i>Protecting low-income, uninsured residents amid policy uncertainty.</i></p> <p>Question: The County is facing an unprecedented number of unknowns regarding federal policies related to the people we serve coupled with limited funding for programs that provide healthcare access to thousands of County residents. Established medical best practices and recommended usage for vaccines and medications are being challenges at an alarming rate. Based on that reality, what in addition to your previous responses, do you see as top priorities regarding low-income, uninsured populations in the County and what solutions do you think are feasible to support those priorities? Is there anything else you would like to add?</p> <p>Responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council President Stewart noted that the County is adapting food security and social service delivery models to better serve vulnerable residents under new conditions. • Other panelists reaffirmed the importance of cross-sector collaboration, flexible funding strategies, and maintaining trusted, culturally competent care through Montgomery Cares clinics and partner organizations. <p>Facilitator Mark Foraker thanked the panelists' for sharing their time and expertise for this year's panel session. If board members have additional questions for the panelists they can be emailed to Ashley Miller</p>			
8.	<p>Committees Meet – FY27 Priorities MCAB</p> <p>The MCAB subcommittees met to further discuss and refine FY27 priorities for the Healthcare for the Uninsured programs and also worked to identify the top priority for each program to be included in the HHS Committee priority statement.</p>			
9.	<p>Committees Report Out – FY27 Priorities MCAB</p> <p>The committees reported out on draft priorities for FY27 for each of the Healthcare for the Uninsured Programs. MCAB will continue to discuss and refine priorities ahead of the October meeting. The Board will vote to finalize FY27 priorities at the October meeting. During the report out, subcommittees identified the top priorities for each Healthcare for the Uninsured program that they would like incorporated into the priority statement for the upcoming HHS Committee Meeting. The top FY27 priority identified for each program is listed below.</p>			

	<p>Care for Kids Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase capacity for specialty dental services to address emergency and complex surgical cases for 125 Care For Kids Children. <p>Dental Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide funding support for an Endodontist or additional funding to support current endodontic care and services offered through the County Dental. <p>Montgomery Cares Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the reimbursement rate for providers at clinics that participate in the Montgomery Cares program for adult primary care visits to \$175 per encounter. <p>Healthcare for the Homeless Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create program that allows for Home Health Aide support in shelters and for previously homeless cleints in permanent supportive housing. <p>Montgomery Perinatal Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create two new positions for bilingual Social Worker II/Therapist I/II or Behavioral Health Case Managers <p>Vote on Top Priorities</p> <p>A motion to was made approve the FY27 top committee priorities.</p> <p><i>Moved by Mark Foraker</i> <i>Seconded by Denise Kishel</i></p> <p><i>The motion was passed unanimously</i></p>			
10	<p>October 22, 2025 – Agenda and Next Steps</p> <p>The next Montgomery Cares Advisory Board (MCAB) meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 22, 2025, and will take place virtually.</p>	Dr. Kathryn Kelly		

	Agenda and meeting materials will be distributed in advance of the session.			
11.	Meeting Adjournment The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 PM <i>Moved by Mark Foraker</i> <i>Seconded by Huixing Lu</i>	Dr. Kathryn Kelly		

Respectfully submitted,


Kate Lu (Oct 24, 2025 17:36:00 EDT)
Huixing (Kate) Lu
Montgomery Cares Advisory Board