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PRESS RELEASE

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Attorney General Brown Announces Appointments to the Maryland Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention

BALTIMORE, MD (July 31, 2024) – Attorney General Anthony G. Brown is pleased to announce appointments to the *Maryland Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention* following the passage of [House Bill 763](#) during the 2024 General Assembly. The Commission is composed of 25 stakeholders from a cross-section of law enforcement, state and local institutions, and organizations representing communities targeted by hate crimes.

Established in 2023, the *Maryland Commission on Hate Crimes Response and Prevention* is charged with the development of strategies to address hate crimes and hate bias activity and the evaluation of Maryland laws and policies related to hate crimes. Chaired by Attorney General Brown, the Commission submits annual reports to the State Department of Education and Maryland General Assembly with policy and legislative recommendations to address hate crimes in schools and the broader community. On April 8, 2024, the General Assembly passed legislation that changed the composition of the Commission and ended the terms of its current members effective June 1, 2024. Under the new legislation, which was approved by the Governor in June, the Attorney General must appoint new members to the Commission with some requiring the advice and consent of the Maryland Senate.

The *Maryland Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention* is the culmination of a multi-year effort, beginning in 2016, by the Office of Attorney General to combat an increasing number of hate crimes and hate bias incidents across the state. Those efforts include the creation of our Hate Crimes Hotline, the former OAG Hate Crimes Task Force (which is now the Commission), and a 2021 Department of Justice (DOJ) Award.

“I am grateful to our past Commission and excited to work with the new Commission,” said Attorney General Brown. “Addressing the difficult issues facing the Commission requires courage, commitment, and respect. Our goal is to combat hate, address underreported incidents, and provide guidance and policy recommendations to stamp out hate in Maryland.”

Fifteen members have been selected based on their representation or advocacy on behalf of a class of persons identified under Maryland’s current hate crimes law, including race, color,

national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and homelessness. These 15 members must be confirmed by the Maryland Senate during the next General Assembly in 2025. Eight members have been appointed from organizations which were specified in the law and two members have been appointed from the general public.

The *Maryland Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention* is comprised of the following members:

Named Organizations

Nine Maryland organizations are named specifically in the law. These organizations are all returning to the Commission, including one new organization that was named in the 2024 legislation, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender.

- **Anthony G. Brown**, *Office of the Attorney General (OAG)* Attorney General, Commission Chair
- **Peter Berns**, *Office of the Attorney General*, General Counsel, Chair Designee
- **Kate Bryan**, *Maryland Center for School Safety*, Executive Director
- **Christine Dulla**, *Maryland State's Attorneys' Association*, Deputy State's Attorney of Queen Anne's County State's Attorney
- **Dave Engel**, *Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center*, Director
- **Cleveland L. Horton, II**, *Maryland Commission on Civil Rights*, Interim Director
- **Rachel Lindley**, *Maryland Office of the Public Defender*, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- **Darryl McSwain**, *Maryland Chiefs of Police Association*, Chief of Police, Maryland-National Capital Park Police of Montgomery County Division
- **Everett Sesker**, *Maryland Sheriff's Association*, Sheriff of Anne Arundel County
- **Yolanda Sonnier**, *Maryland Association of Human Rights/Human Relations Agencies* Administrator, Howard County Office of Human Rights

Individuals Who Represent or Advocate on Behalf of a Protected Class

The following 15 appointments must be confirmed by the Senate in 2025. These members will serve in an acting capacity until that time. They serve in an individual capacity and not as representatives of any organization.

Jennifer Brown is a resident of Anne Arundel County and leads the Community Engagement Department at On Our Own of Maryland in creating dynamic strategies, materials, activities, and events to educate and engage the behavioral health community and the broader public in anti-stigma, peer-led, person-centered, recovery-oriented, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive practices.

Ama S. Frimpong-Houser is a resident of Anne Arundel County and is the Legal Director at CASA, where she advocates for a more just and fair society for low-income, working-class immigrant communities.

Kirsten Gettys Downs is a Baltimore City resident and Executive Director of the Homeless Persons Representation Project. She is also actively involved in her community as the vice chair of the Monumental City Bar Foundation, a member of the Alliance of Black Women Attorneys, Monumental Bar Association, J Franklyn Bourne Bar Association, and the Women's Bar Association - Montgomery County.

Michael Gray is a resident of Prince George's County and is the Deputy Director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Maryland (NAMI MD).

Vicki Jones is a resident of Harford County and is President of the Harford County NAACP. She also works in the Harford County Public School System and is a City of Havre de Grace City Council Member.

Kobi Little is a Baltimore City resident and is President of the Maryland National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Carissa Mattern is a Harford County resident who works as Legislative Director for Baltimore City Council Member Odette Ramos. In this role, Carissa has been a tireless advocate for the LGBTQIA+ and disabled communities while also working on her Doctorate in Criminal Justice with a specialization in Policing.

Gabriel Maximilian Moreno is a resident of Howard County and works for Luminus Network for New Americans. He is also avidly involved in his community with La Alianza Commission in Howard County, the Governor's Office on Hispanic Affairs, the Howard County Democratic Central Committee, and he serves as a board member for HopeWorks of Howard County.

Deborah Miller is Director of Maryland Government and Community Relations for the JCRC (Jewish Community Relations Council) of Greater Washington and works and lives in Montgomery County. She works as an advocate on behalf of the organized local Jewish community and represents their interests to elected officials, government agencies, other faith and ethnic communities, and the media.

Ayman Nassar is a resident of Howard County and is the CEO of the Islamic Leadership Institute where he works with youth to help them be the leaders of tomorrow while also running the Youth Crisis Line to help address their needs and find a stable path forward.

Katie Curran O'Malley is a resident of Baltimore city and is Executive Director of The Women's Law Center of Maryland. She also was a member of the Maryland Judiciary for 22 years and served as a District Court Judge in the City of Baltimore.

Nina Ovian is a resident of Baltimore City and is a Victim Advocate Coordinator at FreeState Justice where she assists survivors of crime with getting connected to resources and support.

Sylvia Royster is a resident of Charles County and is the Director of Educational Partnerships at the College of Southern Maryland. She also has been an advocate for Native American students and families as a school administrator and classroom teacher.

Joraver Singh is a resident of Montgomery County and an active volunteer with the Sikh Coalition as well as a founder of Panja, a non-profit dedicated to empowering Sikhs. He has been instrumental in educating individuals on recognizing and reporting hate crimes and fostering pride in Sikh identity among students.

Lanlan Xu is a resident of Howard County and volunteers as the Chair of the Howard County Asian American and Pacific Islander Commission. She works at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders.

Members of the General Public

Domonique Flowers is a staff attorney at the Pro Bono Resource Center and is a resident of Baltimore City. He works to protect tenant rights when people face evictions. He has been an advocate for people with disabilities and has worked on consumer protection issues.

Carmen Jackson is a resident of Allegany County and an active community volunteer, having served with Carver Community Center, Women's Action Coalition, and the Allegany/Garrett Citizen Review Board. She is retired from Frostburg State University where she was Director of Residence Life.

***Assistant Attorney General Jennifer Frederick continues to serve as counsel to the Commission.**

Commissioner appointments requiring the advice and consent of the Senate will serve in an acting capacity until they receive confirmation during the 2025 legislative session. The two Commissioners of the general public and the eight Commissioners from organizations which were named in HB 763 will serve immediately as full Commissioners. During this transition, the Commission will continue its vital work of developing recommendations for combatting hate activity and will submit its first reports in December of this year.

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<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2024/073124.pdf>