

ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT
DEPARTMENT OF
AGING & HUMAN SERVICES
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
Amy Davis -CoChair
Vante Burkes—Co-Chair
Cynthia Brown-Commission Liaison



COMMISSIONERS OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY:
James R. Guy, President
Michael R. Alderson, Jr., Commissioner
Eric S. Colvin, Commissioner
Michael L. Hewitt, Commissioner
Scott R. Ostrow, Commissioner

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Purpose

Since 1963, the St. Mary's County Human Relations Commission (HRC) has been empowered to promote understanding and harmony of relationships between the people of the county and to use its influence and persuasion to direct the community's efforts to the solution of problems that cause racial and other tensions stemming from acts of discrimination within the county.

Activities

The HRC continued their support of the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Prayer Breakfast held at St. Mary's College of Maryland by contributing to planning meetings for the virtual event and assisting with public relations.

The HRC continued to seek ways to increase its community outreach efforts in light of the ongoing pandemic. The Commission chose to increase their visibility through social media. Their Facebook page, which was initiated in 2021, proved to be an effective way to convey the mission and activities of the HRC, as well as show support for other community events and organizations committed to the ideals of civil rights and equity.

HRC members participated in a series of stakeholder meetings convened by the Department of Land Use and Growth Management as a requirement to update the county's Comprehensive Plan. Representation from the HRC was a step in ensuring matters of equity and human services were considered in all aspects of the Plan. The HRC and Gap Analysis Task Force strongly advocated that the stakeholder discussion groups reflect the St. Mary's County citizenry in terms of ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic and educational background.

Challenges

The membership continued to struggle with ways to accomplish its goals of advocating for human/civil rights and cultural diversity during the restrictions of COVID-19. Like many organizations, the HRC was limited to virtual meetings and social media to convey their mission. HRC members stated they felt “less connected to the community” due to the inability to engage in person, as they had in the past.

Membership vacancies and meeting attendance remained a concern in 2022. Several member’s work hours changed or increased as a result of the pandemic and they weren’t able to attend meetings. Often commission business could not be conducted due to not having a quorum.

Plans

HRC members continue to discuss ways to better serve the community and promote the importance of positive relationships among all people. Members plan to observe direction provided from the State regarding human relations matters and research best practices from other jurisdictions. They also hope to partner with other human services organizations to convene public conversations regarding human relations and conflict resolution. Of course, the feasibility of these plans will be greatly influenced by the pandemic.

Membership as of December 31, 2022

Joshua Brewster
Vante Burkes
Joanna Colvin
Jesus Godinez
Steve Hall
Tara Cruz
Max Levasseur
Cheremie Frisby-Spencer

Adrienne Dillahunt
Sean Wickers
Amy Davis
Sean Wicker