

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



COMMISSIONERS OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY:

James R. Guy, President
Eric Colvin, Commissioner
Michael L. Hewitt, Commissioner
Todd B. Morgan, Commissioner
John E. O'Connor, Commissioner

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
2020 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 co-sponsored the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Prayer Breakfast held at St. Mary's College of Maryland by contributing to planning meetings and assisting with public relations. The HRC continues to work with St. Mary's College, as well as St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS), in their diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. SMCPS provided a presentation to the HRC regarding their equitable education efforts, particularly in the Social Studies curriculum and efforts to recruit and employ more people of color as teachers, administrators and mentors. The HRC partnered with the SMC Mediation Center and Public Library to help facilitate the "Virtual Longest Table" event held over the summer, in which conversations were had with the general public regarding topics of concern in our community. Historically, this event surrounds bringing people together to share a meal and converse but due to COVID-19, it was held via ZOOM. The HRC initiated a discussion with the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office about the racial climate in the nation and county in light of the protests surrounding deaths of African Americans and the lack of convictions. The Sheriff's Office discussed changes in the SMC Sheriff's Office training protocol that were in place prior to the protests and gave an update on additional changes put in place in response to the protests. Additionally, Sheriff Cameron met with the Sheriffs in Charles and Calvert Counties to discuss uniformity in training protocols.

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Challenges

The membership continues 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 is limited to virtual meetings and social media to convey their mission. To that end, the HRC is interested in establishing a Facebook page, similar to the Commission for Women. The Commission is also discussing plans to invite the Chairs of the various affinity groups in the County (Commission on People with Disabilities, NAACP, CFW, etc.) to educate one another on their missions and discuss mutual challenges and opportunities for collaboration.

Plans

The following are ideas that were discussed as potential ways to make the HRC more relevant in these turbulent times:

1. On behalf of the Board of County Commissioner's assess the diversity, equity and inclusion environment within county government and issue a report and recommendations.
2. Partner with other human services organizations to convene public conversations regarding human relations and conflict resolution.
3. Assist the coordination of a multi-cultural event that celebrates the diversity in St. Mary's county
4. Increase visibility and communication with the public be social media

The HRC will be investigating the feasibility of these ideas over the course of the upcoming year.

Membership as of December 31, 2020

Joshua Brewster, Co-Chair (2nd Term ends June 2021)

Vante Burkes, Co-Chair (2nd Term ends June 2022)

Joanna Colvin (2nd Term ends June 2022)

Jesus Godinez (2nd Term ends December 2022)

Steve Hall (1st full Term ends Dec. 2022)
Tara Cruz (1st Term ends December 2022)
Gabrielle Lawrence (1st Term ends December 2022)
Cheremie Frisby-Spencer (1st Term ends June 30, 2021)
Adrienne Dilahunt (1st Term ends June 30, 2022)
Ashley Raley (Partial Term- June 30, 2022)
Amy Davis (Partial Term- June 30, 2022)
Sean Wicker (1st Term- December 31, 2023)