

# **Maryland Higher Education Commission**

## **Meeting Book**

**August 27, 2025**



Wes Moore  
Governor

Aruna Miller  
Lt. Governor

## Commission Member Roster

Name	Title
Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.	Secretary of Higher Education
Catherine J. “Cassie” Motz	Chair
Chike Aguh	Vice Chair
Kathleen Bands, Ph.D.	Commissioner
Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.	Commissioner
Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.	Commissioner
Barbara Kerr Howe	Commissioner
Narcisa A. Polonio, Ed.D.	Commissioner
Rebecca Taber Staehelin	Commissioner
Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.	Commissioner
Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.	Commissioner
Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.	Commissioner
Sarah Otwey	Student Commissioner

# Table of Contents

Section	Page
Section I: Meeting Agenda	
Section II: Minutes from Previous Meeting.....	1
Section III: Business	
Proposed Amendments to the Commission Bylaws.....	6
Section III: General Information & Reference	
2025 Meeting Dates.....	9

**Maryland Higher Education Commission**  
**Meeting Agenda: Wednesday, August 27, 2025**

**Time:** 10:00 AM

**Location:** <https://meet.google.com/cdp-tnqw-mbh>

Or dial: (US) +1 224-650-8497 PIN: 274 901 622#

More phone numbers:

<https://tel.meet/cdp-tnqw-mbh?pin=7149418742596>

**Key:** \* = Voting Item

**I. Welcome & Call to Order**

A. Chair's and Secretary's Remarks

**II. Review & Approval of Previous Minutes**

A. \*Review of minutes from the meeting on Wednesday, July 23, 2025

**III. Business**

A. Update on the Maryland State Plan for Higher Education (Vice Chair Aguh and Deputy Secretary Quiroz-Livanis)

B. \*Bylaw Amendments (Chair Motz)

1. Commissioners will consider revisions to Articles IV, V and VI of the MHEC Bylaws, including updates regarding the appointment and service of the Secretary of Higher Education, quorum requirements, and updated statutory references. The proposed amendments are provided.

C. \*Resumption of the Review Meeting - Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) Proposal for a Bachelor of Design (BDes) in Interior Design

**IV. Public Comment**

**V. Announcements**

A. The next Commission meeting will be on Wednesday, September 17, 2025 at 10:00 AM EST.

**VI. Adjournment**

## Maryland Higher Education Commission Meeting Minutes

July 23, 2025 10:00 a.m.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) met virtually via Google Meet.

### Commission Members Present:

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz, Chair	Chike Aguh, Vice Chair
Kathleen Bands, Ph.D.	Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.
Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.	Barbara Kerr Howe
Narcisa A. Polonio, Ed.D.	Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.
Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.	Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.
Sarah Otwey, Student Commissioner	

### Commission Members Absent:

- Rebecca Taber Staehelin

### MHEC Staff Members Present:

Glenda Abney	Bryson Barksdale	Alix Chaillou
Al Dorsett	Kristin Clarkson	Emily A. A. Dow, Ph.D.
Jennifer Fischetti	Stephanie Frangos	Alicia Gainey
Tiffany Majors	Brittany Martin	Alexis Merriman
Elisabeth Layton	Shirlita Lee	Geoff Newman
Alexandra Nguyen	Everette Jackson	Victoria Johnson
Karen King-Sheridan	Elena Quiroz-Livanis	Melissa Leuschel
Khia Poteat	Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.	Anthony Reiner
Desiree Rodriguez	Laura Schenk	Daniel Schuster

Cheryl Shea	Lyndsay Silva	Ellen Starks
Kimberly Ward	Thomas Waters Jr.	Matthew Wilkinson

## Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by **Chair Motz** at approximately 10:00 a.m. A meeting quorum was established with ten (10) out of twelve (12) members present.

## Chair's and Secretary's Remarks

**Chair Motz** welcomed everyone to the meeting, including new student **Commissioner Otwey** from the University of Maryland College Park.

**Secretary Rai** welcomed the new commissioners and highlighted MHEC's ongoing efforts. He reported the approval of six new degree and certificate programs in the last month, with a 99.41% approval rate for 502 proposals out of 505 in the past year. 96 of those proposals were for new degree and certificate programs. He announced the formation of a steering committee for a new state plan for higher education over the next five years. He reported on the new academic momentum dashboard. He also introduced guest presenters Kamal Essaheb and Thomas Harnisch.

## Public Comments

There were no public comments.

## Commission Meeting Minutes Approval

A motion was made by **Commissioner Howe** and seconded by **Commissioner Burnim** to approve the minutes from the June 26, 2025 meeting. **Commissioner Dukes** abstained from the vote as she was not present at the previous meeting. The motion passed.

## Federal Policy Updates

Kamal Essaheb, Senior Advisor and Director for Immigrant Affairs for the State of Maryland, discussed several significant federal immigration policy changes:

- Department of Education Interpretive Rule:** On July 10, the Department of Education issued an interpretive rule redefining federal public benefits, subjecting certain career technical and adult education programs to citizenship and status eligibility requirements. Maryland's Attorney General has joined 20 other states in a lawsuit against these policy changes.

- **Visa Issuance Policy Changes:** The biggest change over the past six months were visa cancellations and record terminations. Student visa interviews, which had been paused, resumed in late July with new social media vetting requirements.
- **Duration of Status:** A proposed regulation seeks to change the duration of stay for F-1 student visa holders from "duration of status" to a set end date, which could require students to leave the country and reapply for a visa to complete programs or pursue further degrees.
- **HB1222 and Immigration Enforcement Guidance:** House Bill 1222 requires the Attorney General to publish guidance for educational institutions on interacting with immigration enforcement. This guidance has been published and state and local government units involved in education or healthcare must have policies consistent with it by October 1st.
- **New Visa Fee Schedule:** Effective July 4th, an updated fee schedule introduces new fees for individuals applying for certain visas or receiving documents upon entry into the United States, adding at least \$274 to the cost of various paperwork.

Thomas Harnisch, Vice President for Government Relations at the State Higher Education Executive Officers, detailed provisions of the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act:"

- **FAFSA Exemptions:** Starting July 1, 2026, assets of family farms, small businesses with less than 100 employees, and commercial fishing businesses will be exempt from FAFSA calculations.
- **Federal Loan Limits:** Graduate PLUS loans will end on July 1, 2026. New federal loan limits for graduate students will be capped at \$20,500 annually for master's students (lifetime total \$100,000) and \$50,000 annually for professional programs (lifetime total \$200,000), with a total federal loan limit of \$257,000. Parent PLUS loans will be capped at \$20,000 annually with a \$65,000 lifetime limit per student.
- **Loan Repayment Programs:** After July 1, 2026, federal student loans will be repaid using either a standard or income-driven repayment plan.
- **Workforce Pell Grants:** These will be available for accredited providers supporting short-term programs (150-600 clock hours, 8-15 weeks) approved by the governor in consultation with the state workforce board, with strict completion and job placement rate requirements.
- **Pell Grant Eligibility:** A provision will make students ineligible for Pell Grants if their total cost of attendance is covered by other sources. There is concern that Pell will be considered "last dollar," potentially requiring Maryland to change its statutes for programs like the Guaranteed Access Grant. Negotiated rulemaking on financial aid provisions is expected in the fall.

- **Accountability Metrics (Undergraduate):** Effective 2026, new student loans will be banned from programs where most completers earn less than the median high school graduate (ages 25-34) in the same state.
- **Accountability Metrics (Graduate):** Effective 2026, new federal student loans will be banned for programs where the majority of completers earn less than a bachelor's degree recipient in the same field and state.
- **Medicaid and SNAP Cuts:** Provisions in tax legislation include cuts to Medicaid and SNAP, which could directly affect students and create financial strains on rural hospitals affiliated with universities.

## **Update on the Maryland State Plan for Higher Education**

**Vice Chair Aguh** presented an update on the Maryland State Plan for Higher Education, describing it as the "guiding northstar" for the system over the next four years. He detailed extensive "road show" engagement with stakeholders to ensure an ambitious plan. The plan's recalibrated goals focus on completion, credentials of value, and public impact, with equity as an overarching principle. Steering committee meetings will delve into topics like equitable access, student success, workforce alignment, and research and development, including emerging priorities such as artificial intelligence and civic education.

## **Department of Finance & Administration - Geoffrey Newman**

### **Office of Student Financial Assistance - Al Dorsett**

- **Howard P. Rawlings Program Update:** For FY26, funding increased by 21% to \$138,664,752, with a maximum award of \$18,000. As of the meeting, 10,485 students were awarded, and 7,093 had accepted. Higher cancellation and decline rates for the Guaranteed Access Grant are attributed to expanded eligibility, leading to more students being offered the grant who may not attend a Maryland institution or accept the award within the six-week period.
- **Remaining Funds and Future Awarding:** \$33,337,453 remains for awarding, with 1,021 renewals missing spring 2025 credits and 556 initial applicants selected for verification. Approximately \$50 million is estimated to be available for Education Assistance (EA) grant renewals starting in August.
- **Expediting Funds to Students:** Mr. Dorsett suggested continued advocacy for additional funds and streamlining processes, especially with the upcoming decentralization of award decisions to institutions by October 1st.
- **Addressing Missing Credits and Appeals:** Missing credits are due to institutions waiting for summer session completion or individuals not attending. Approximately 400-500 appeals have been received. Decentralization is expected to prevent delays in awards.



- **Final Adoption of Regulations:** Two sets of regulations were presented for final adoption:
  - **COMAR 13B 08.03 for the Charles W. Raleigh firefighting ambulance rescue squad member scholarship.** These regulations implement legislative changes to expand the scholarship for recruitment and retention of firefighters and emergency services personnel (COMAR 13B 08.03.02 Eligibility, COMAR 13B 08.03.04 Award Amount).
    - **Chair Motz** moved for the adoption of regulations consistent with Mr. Dorsett's recommendation, which was seconded by **Commissioner Burnim**. The motion passed unanimously.
  - Al Dorsett presented amendments to regulations for the workforce development sequence scholarship, noting that the commission had approved them for publication on March 26, 2025, and no public comments were received during the comment period.
    - **Chair Motz** moved to approve the final adoption of these amendments, which was seconded by **Commissioner Thompson** and **Commissioner Howe**, and the motion passed.

### **Department of Academic Affairs - Dr. Emily Dow**

- **Letters of Intent:** Dr. Emily Dow provided an update on House Bill 1244, which introduces a new process for Letters of Intent for graduate programs. This new process provides early feedback on potential duplication and facilitates collaboration. A draft template has been developed with the Program Review Process Advisory Council and feedback from commissioners is being sought before finalization. The process will be piloted before formal regulations are presented. The template includes sections for institution and program overview, draft program details, justification of reasonableness regarding duplication, intended population, potential prerequisites and admissions requirements, and existing/new resource considerations for collaboration.
  - **Chair Motz** moved to approve the letter of intent template and authorize staff to implement the outlined process beginning October 1, 2025, which was seconded by **Commissioner Howe**. The motion passed.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by **Chair Motz**. The next Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 27, 2025.

Approved by the Commission:

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Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz, Chair

## **MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION**

### **PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE BYLAWS**

WHEREAS, the Maryland Higher Education Commission (“the Commission”) adopted its current bylaws on October 6, 1989;

WHEREAS, Article VII of the bylaws provides that amendments may be adopted by a majority of the voting members at any regular meeting, provided the proposed amendment is circulated at least fourteen days in advance;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Commission hereby amends its bylaws as follows:

#### **Amendment 1: Article IV, Section 1.B – Secretary of Higher Education**

Current Language: The Secretary of Higher Education shall serve at the pleasure of the Commission. A vacancy in the position of Secretary of Higher Education shall be filled in accordance with the procedure specified by statute. Until such vacancy is filled, the Commission shall designate a person to serve as Acting Secretary of Higher Education, and such person shall have and exercise all the authority and powers of the Secretary of Higher Education until such time as the vacancy in the position of Secretary of Higher Education is filled in accordance with the procedure specified by statute.

Amended Language: The Secretary of Higher Education shall serve in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth in Title 11 of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland.

#### **Amendment 2: Article V, Section 4.B – Quorum for Academic Program Review Meetings**

New Language (to be inserted as Section 4.B): Review Meeting Quorum and Action Threshold. For any meeting at which the Commission considers objections to academic program proposals or conducts a review pursuant to Education Article §11-206.1, a quorum shall consist of the number of Commissioners specified in Figure 1 below, which shows both the number of Commissioners required for a quorum and the number of Commissioners required for approval of a formal action, depending on how many Commissioners are then serving.

Figure 1.

No. of Commissioners Serving	Number of votes needed for approval of formal action	Review Hearing Quorum
12	7	10
11	6	9
10	6	8
9	5	7

Note: Subsequent subsections will be re-lettered accordingly.

#### Amendment 3: Article V, Section 4.C – Conduct of Meetings

Current Language: All Commission meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act (Title 10, Subtitle 5 of the State Government Article, Annotated Code of Maryland)

Amended Language: All Commission meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act (Title 3 of the General Provisions Article, Annotated Code of Maryland)

#### Amendment 4: Article VI, Section 7.B – Conduct of Meetings

Current Language: All Commission meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act (Title 10, Subtitle 5 of the State Government Article, Annotated Code of Maryland)

Amended Language: All Commission meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act (Title 3 of the General Provisions Article, Annotated Code of Maryland)

## **Maryland Higher Education Commission**

### **2025 Meeting Dates**

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) is Maryland's higher education coordinating board responsible for managing statewide financial aid programs and establishing statewide policies for public and private colleges and career schools to support students' postsecondary pursuits.

Commission meetings are held on the 4th Wednesday of each month from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., with certain exceptions noted below.

### **Scheduled Meeting Dates for 2025**

- January 22
- February 26
- March 26
- April 23
- May 28
- June 26
- July 23
- August 27
- September 17
  - (3rd Wednesday)
  - 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
  - Hybrid
- October 22
- November 19
  - (3rd Wednesday)
- December 10
  - 2nd Wednesday

Dates, times, and meeting modality are subject to change. Please check the website for the most up-to-date information:

<http://www.mhec.maryland.gov/About/Pages/Meetings.aspx>