

MARYLAND COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Date: 03/22/22

Time: 10am to 12pm

Minutes

Commissioners in Attendance: Camille Burke, Ben Grumbles, Joseph Griffiths, Lesliam Quiros, Monica Brooks, Subha Chandar, Voncia Molock, Crystal Faison, Paula Dannenfeldt, Melissa Brown, Paulette Hammond, Delegate Boyce, John Papagni

Members of the public: Devon Dodson, Lisa Nissley, Diane Walker, Denise Sarchiapone, Horacio Tablada, Kimberlee Drake, Rebecca Rehr, Veronika Carella, Suzanne Dorsey, Gabrielle Leach, Dorothy Morrison

Introductions & Administration Items

Camille Burke welcomed the Commission and reminded everyone to file their financial disclosure with the Ethics Commission. These are due April 30, 2022. Information can be found here:

<https://ethics.maryland.gov/employeeofficials/financial-disclosure/>

https://efds.ethics.maryland.gov/login?sender_from=ethics.public%40maryland.gov

Camille Burke stated we are looking forward to summer and hopeful we may be able to get out into the community. Devon Dodson asked Commissioners to think about if we are ready to meet in person. We want to have everyone comfortable with this before we do it and we also know we will need to start going to other sites to learn more about EJ concerns. Joseph Griffiths mentioned he is fine with in person meetings, but if it changes any meeting dates, please let us know with plenty of lead time so people can make the meetings. Devon Dodson responded that yes, we will stick with Tuesdays. Last year changes like that were dictated by Covid. Times may be adjusted for travel, etc. We have consistently heard from Curtis Bay so that may be an option. We would like to work a visit out for this summer. Please be in touch with Devon Dodson or Camille Burke to share your thoughts on in person meetings.

Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities

The bill that passed last year updating the CEJSC requires coordination with the Maryland Office of Minority Health & Health Disparities. We reached out and Diane Walker agreed to join us. She is the Acting Deputy Director of the office. She shared that she has spent a lot of time lately reviewing legislation. The office has a five person staff and uses an equity lens to look at health policy. The office is responsible for some grants that spread across the state. Currently there are 17 grantees. They also use social determinants. Covid has revealed a lot of areas that need better services, better assistance.

Camille Burke shared that this office has been helpful when they are trying to test a large group, such as a group of immigrants that need to be tested for lead, and with other health issues.

Monica Brooks asked via chat, how can we help? Specifically on the shore. Diane Walker will share a list of the grantees on the shore. She also mentioned as people move and change it is good to have contacts, email addresses, etc. Anything she can share is helpful with communication. Subha Chandar shared that she and Diane are colleagues in different areas of the Department of Health. She is happy to help communicate between the two groups. Voncia Molock asked what is a RFA and where to find out about them. This is a request for application - submit a proposal for the community they are representing. Listings are on their website <https://health.maryland.gov/mhhd/Pages/home.aspx>. Please email if you have any questions (diane.walker@maryland.gov).

Definitions of EJ

Devon Dodson pulled up the [2020-2021 Annual CEJSC Report](#) to share the section on EJ definitions. Maryland has a definition on EJ, but no there is definition of an EJ community. There is a Federal definition of overburdened, but underserved not included in that definition. Cumulative impacts aren't in law but MDOT considers CI in their decisions. Last week we shared a memo being circulated by a coalition of environmental advocates that lists all of the definitions proposed in legislation this year. It is not a CEJSC or MDE document, but it is of interest as we all try to better define underserved and overburdened communities. Many would ultimately use EJ screening tools.

MDE is already looking to embed this into our operations and use a MDE tool to do this work. We want to look at areas that need more attention with enforcement, permits, and infrastructure to see what we can provide.

The discussion among Commissioners revealed some concerns. The group is happy to see this discussion, but wants to know who will use these definitions, if it will be used across state agencies, and if there is a way for the CEJSC to be involved. Do we know what areas these definitions will include? Internally created a map using two of the three indicators and it is a lot of the city, the ring around DC, and has areas in Garrett and the Eastern Shore. At our next meeting, we can run maps with the tool.

Others mentioned that they want to make sure any score assigned to a neighborhood is explained in away that the community/user understands what that score means.

Delegate Boyce said we should ask ourselves what we want to adopt. What makes sense and is feasible? She is also concerned about communities not wanting to be defined as EJ communities, but also we don't want communities using this to address NIMBY type concerns. By chat, Monica Brooks shared: "Yes Thank you. Madame Chair. We must have considerable outreach, training and partnering with grassroots groups to try to make the terms as clear as possible." Also, she said we want to see common sense being used too, what the community sees is valid. She likes looking at cumulative impacts and wants to see that defined too. Voncia Molock said she thinks this is a good conversation. As a newer member, she agrees about the data, but if we have tools that help us measure this we need to help a lay person to understand the impact to human health.

Legislation

We quickly reviewed the bill status list that was emailed out. In the chat, Paulette Hammond shared that the EHRA will not get out of committee in the Senate, so it is essentially dead, but it will come back in 2023!

Public Comment

Veronika Carella - Please add the topic of "Sustainable Communities Concerns" to the agenda for the next CEJSC meeting. CEJSC is tasked with ensuring that communities remain sustainable throughout the state – even if they are not yet identified as an EJ community. The goal is to prevent them from becoming an EJ community by protecting the air, water and soil – our natural resources. As evidenced by the bills introduced during this Legislative Session, there are great concerns regarding protecting air, water and soil or "threats" to environmental sustainability. There are areas that should be addressed by this commission regarding weaknesses and areas where greater protection is needed to ensure communities do not become EJ communities – as outlined in the MD HiAP Final REPORT to the Gov and Legislature. Maryland Health in All Policies FINAL REPORT (MD HiAP)

<https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000113/024600/024610/20200396e.pdf> Please share all input from CEJSC to the MGS during this legislative session, whether informational, testimony or other form which is a public document.

Rebecca Rehr shared that she is five weeks into her new role at LCV. She was not involved in the origins of the definitions, but she has jumped in as we advance the conversation in the legislature. She is happy to answer any questions.

Monica Brooks shared by chat: Veronika I agree with points made in your input #1. Part of my fight is that we have communities are on the verge and we want to protect them proactively while assisting communities already in dire conditions.

Secretary Grumbles shared that MDE is Celebrating Women History's month with Chair Brenda Mallory of the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) in Washington, D.C., as our guest speaker, and will make the link available. Lisa Nissley shared it is at 3:30p tomorrow; to participate by phone, call 1-302-715-2245 and enter PIN: 312 598 708#.

Adjournment at 11:32p