

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL
LGBTQIA+ Workgroup
MINUTES
March 21, 2025

- **Members Present:**

Krystal Oriadha, Council Member District 7, Co-Chair
Courtney Mariette, Deputy Director, Office of Community Relations, Co-Chair
Elana Belon-Butler, Director, Department of Family Services
Kyla Hanington, Public Outreach & Engagement Division Manager, Office of Human Rights
Jose Villegas, Deputy Director, Office of Human Rights

- **Member Absent:**

Khouri Lassiter, Advocate for Youth,
Lauren Wethers-Coggins, Department of Social Services
Jermaine Wyatt, Director of Community Health, Us Helping Us
Jason Jude, Chief of Teams, Us Helping Us
Dr. Diane Young, Associate Director, Family Health Services Division,
Department of Health

- **Staff Present**

Sandra Eubanks, HHSPS Committee Director
Rhonda Riddick, HHSPS Committee Aide
Leroy Maddox, Legislative Attorney
Melody Arrington, EWD Committee Aide
Tiffany Hannon, Chief of Staff, Council Member Oriadha Office

- **Welcome & Opening Remarks**

Co-Chair Oriadha called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. She emphasized the group's purpose of identifying gaps in county resources and services for the LGBTQIA+ community. She highlighted that meetings are public, recorded, and shared on the council website, along with all presentations. She appreciated the members' contributions and enthusiasm for developing recommendations to improve services for the LGBTQIA+ community.

Co-Chair Courtney Mariette, Deputy Director, Office of Community Relations, echoed her gratitude, acknowledged Co-Chair Oriadha's leadership, and expressed commitment to the group's ongoing work.

- **Review the February 21, 2025, minutes**

Director Butler motioned to approve the minutes, and Ms. Mariette seconded to approve the minutes as presented.

- **Focus Topic Discussion**

- Public Education Campaign/Public Safety/Cross Agencies Coordination

Co-Chair Oriadha highlighted that a shared document for recommendations was provided, and the members were encouraged to contribute their ideas before or during the meeting. She emphasized open discussion, inviting members to share thoughts, questions, or recommendations.

- Integrating an Inclusive LGBTQIA+ curriculum into the Public School System for K-12

Co-Chair Oriadha expressed that this initiative would require one to two years to implement, involve moderate costs, and have a high impact. It would mandate the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ history, contributions, and topics, along with teacher training and inclusive materials to ensure respectful representation. Co-Chair Oriadha emphasized that similar efforts have been made for other marginalized groups and highlighted the importance of education in reducing homophobia and misinformation.

- Strengthening anti-bullying and safe school policies

Co-Chair Oriadha discussed the importance of strengthening anti-bullying and safe school policies to explicitly protect students and teachers based on sexual orientation and gender identity. She emphasized the need for transparent reporting mechanisms and support systems, highlighting past instances when teachers faced discrimination. The recommendation is considered short-term, low-cost, and high impact.

Director Elana Belon-Butler, Department of Family Services, asked whether specific anti-bullying training is included in new teacher orientation and suggested that it should be considered if not already in place. She emphasized the importance of such training, given the current climate. Co-Chair Oriadha acknowledged the point and requested that staff contact Donna Christy, President of PGCEA, to determine whether teachers must undergo mandatory anti-bullying training. Co-Chair Oriadha agrees that identifying existing anti-bullying training for teachers is a great idea and considers it an easy opportunity for implementation.

- Comprehensive Teacher Training on LGBTQIA+ Issues

Co-Chair Oriadha continued with the following recommendation since a question about determining if such training existed had already been raised.

- LGBTQIA+ Mental Health Support In Schools

Co-Chair Oriadha discussed the recommendation for LGBTQIA+ mental health support in schools, which would take three to five years to implement, have moderate to high costs, and have a high impact. The proposal includes funding mental health services tailored to LGBTQIA+ students, such as affirming counselors and peer support programs. She highlighted the high suicide rates among LGBTQIA+ youth and stressed the importance of providing adequate mental health resources. Co-Chair Oriadha notes that the School System currently uses Hazel Health for mental health services but is unsure if it includes specialized training for LGBTQIA+ students. She also mentioned in-house counselors and another category of school therapists, questioning their training and qualifications in supporting LGBTQIA+

students. Co-Chair Oriadha requested staff to inquire about school counselors' current training on supporting LGBTQIA+ students.

- LGBTQIA+ Sensitivity Training for Law Enforcement

Co-Chair Oriadha proposed a recommendation for LGBTQIA+ Sensitivity Training for Law Enforcement, which would involve assigning LGBTQIA+ liaison officers and making training mandatory as part of required law enforcement education. Co-Chair Oriadha is unsure if such training is already a standard part of police training and seeks input on the current requirements for law enforcement training.

Co-Chair Mariette indicated she knew who to contact and agreed to make the connection. If the answer is affirmative, Co-Chair Oriadha suggested having the person speak to the group at the next meeting to clarify the details of the training requirements. If the answer is no, the matter can be managed as a recommendation without a presentation.

Leroy Maddox, Legislative Officer, suggested that if the current training is not meeting the needs, it may be worth exploring whether union negotiations or other avenues could introduce LGBTQIA+ sensitivity training for law enforcement.

Co-Chair Mariette mentioned the Prince George's County Police Department's strong focus on the LGBTQIA+ community, noting their engagement unit. However, she stressed that she must verify and report to the group.

Co-Chair Oriadha acknowledged that the Police Department has a liaison group that sponsors Pride events but questions whether this includes training. She agreed with the previous point about exploring whether mandatory training is negotiated or set by the state. She emphasized the goal of making LGBTQIA+ sensitivity training mandatory rather than optional for all officers.

- Improving Hate Crime Reporting and Response System

Co-Chair Oriadha discussed a recommendation for improving hate crime reporting and response systems, with a moderate time of three to five years and a possible high cost but significant impact. The recommendation suggested establishing precise, accessible reporting mechanisms and improving coordination between law enforcement and community organizations to support victims. Co-Chair Oriadha emphasized the importance of building trust, particularly for the LGBTQIA+ community, and highlighted past efforts like a task force by the state's attorney office that focused on trans victims. She called for a transparent process across agencies and more public education on reporting discrimination.

- Creation of a Long-term, Interagency LGBTQIA+ Task Force

Co-Chair Oriadha suggested creating a long-term, interagency LGBTQIA+ task force to improve coordination and policy implementation across government agencies. This task force would track progress, address issues, and integrate policies, ensuring the community's needs are better addressed within the system. She emphasized the importance of moving beyond a short-term workgroup and focusing on practical policy changes within agencies.

- LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Housing and Homelessness Programs

Co-Chair Oriadha discussed the need for LGBTQIA+ inclusive housing and homelessness programs, particularly for youth and seniors, focusing on non-discriminatory practices and funding for LGBTQIA+-affirming housing. She emphasized the importance of understanding current shelter policies, especially for trans individuals, such as whether trans women are allowed in women's shelters without intrusive questions or assumptions. She also seeks clarification on the existence of any dedicated programs or funding for the trans community in the area, especially in light of past shelter closures.

Staff was asked to contact the DCAO for Health and Human Services and the Director of Social Services to clarify the current procedures at women's and men's shelters regarding transgender individuals and whether any specific funding is allocated for emergency shelter programs serving the LGBTQIA+ community.

- Strengthening Healthcare protections against discrimination for LGBTQIA+ Individuals

Co-Chair Oriadha discussed the recommendation for strengthening healthcare protections against discrimination for LGBTQIA+ individuals. She focused on ensuring access to gender-affirming care and providing training for medical professionals on LGBTQIA+ health needs. She emphasized ensuring that healthcare providers, especially those receiving county funding, offer respectful and gender-affirming care.

- **Identify Next Steps**

Members were reminded to submit any additional recommendations, and at the next meeting, the group will continue discussing recommendations for the next focus topic.

- **Next Meeting Date**

April 18, 2025 @ 2:30 p.m.

- **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:35 p.m.