



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES

June 3, 2024 • Virtual Public Session Minutes

MEMBERS

Brandon Bragg  
BOARD CHAIR

Michele Levy  
BOARD VICE CHAIR

Rishi Nixon  
BOARD SECRETARY

Kendell Battle

Anthony Carter

Shadrene Howard  
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Dawn Luedtke  
COUNTY COUNCILMEMBER

Swapnika Madhavaram

Larniece McKoy Moore

Loveline Tangwan  
OUTREACH COMMITTEE CHAIR

Yuma Tomes

2 VACANT SEATS

STAFF

Oscar Mensah  
COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES OFFICER

Hannah Shaw  
BOARD STAFF

Kristin Cummings  
COUNTY COUNCIL STAFF

Caroline Davenport  
COUNTY COUNCIL STAFF

Lisa Merkin  
SENIOR ADMINISTRATOR OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Montgomery County Board of Social Services was called to order by **Chair Bragg** at 4:10 p.m.

**MOTION** to approve the minutes of the April public session by **A. Carter**, seconded by **R. Nixon**.

BOARD VACANCIES

Ms. Shaw reviewed the board’s upcoming vacancies. **K. Battle’s** term is expiring, and applications for three vacant seats are being advertised during the summer recess.

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

Senior Administrator Lisa Merkin presented the board a report of her service areas, relationships with other county agencies, and important metrics. She reviewed the significance of Families First legislation and its impact on Montgomery County’s child welfare services. Ms. Merkin staffs the Citizens Review Panel on Children, and she reviewed the initiatives the body has championed lately.

**B. Bragg** asked a question about Ms. Merkin’s opinion on rate reform and congregate care bed capacity. A larger discussion emerged in statewide efforts and interagency integration of services — **Councilmember Luedtke** emphasized the importance of that integration extending to to the local level.

Ms. Merkin noted that the Citizens Review Panel would set priorities at its upcoming June meeting, and she would work to connect the Board of Social Services with their areas.

**M. Levy** asked a question on eligibility requirements for foster parenting. Ms. Merkin emphasized that Child Welfare Services is extremely open to the range of families that can serve foster children. **M. Levy** reflected on the misperception that foster parents must also be full-time parents, and that as something the Board could consider as a future priority. Ms. Merkin echoed support for the idea.

## COMMITTEE SESSIONS

Upon the adjournment of committee sessions, the Legislative and Outreach committees reported on the results of their deliberation on priority areas for the Board to focus on. The board voted on which of the proposed priorities to adopt for the coming year. The following four were selected to present to the County Council in October by majority vote. Committee sessions at the next meeting will include refinement and planning of initiatives in these areas.

- Staffing & Consistency of Service Delivery
- Multilingual Service Access & Technology
- Coordinate with Other BCCs (Citizens Review Panel, Commission on Aging, etc.)
- Bring more awareness to Foster Care initiatives

## MEETING SCHEDULE

The Board also voted to approve its meeting schedule for the upcoming year. Two in-person meetings, one in June and one in October were decided upon.

The Chair and Co-Chair elections were set for the October meeting and nominations were opened.

## ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION** to adjourn the June public session, by **R. Nixon**, adopted by unanimous consent at 5:08 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING** to be held in Rockville on Monday, October 7th, 2024, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

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