



GRETCHEN
WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF GLOBAL MICHIGAN
LANSING

SUSAN
CORBIN
DIRECTOR

Michigan LGBTQ+ Commission Public Meeting
Friday, August 9th, 2024, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Timothy J. Nelson Innovation Center & Library | Northwestern Michigan College Building
1701 E Front St. Traverse City, MI 49686

LGBTQ+ Commission Meeting Proposed Agenda

- I. Call to Order.....Administrative Chair, Raúl Hernández-Guzmán
- II. Land Acknowledgement.....Administrative Chair, Raúl Hernández-Guzmán
- III. Roll Call / Determination of QuorumExecutive Secretary, Audra Wilson
- IV. Approval of Agenda & Meeting Minutes.....Vice Chair, Brandon Shamoun
- V. Opening RemarksExecutive Director and Chief Equity Officer, Poppy Hernandez
- VI. Office of Global Michigan Update.....Commissions Administrative Manager, Mika Mcaskill
- VII. Commission Chairperson’s ReportAdministrative Chair, Raúl Hernández-Guzmán
- VIII. Treasurer Report..... Treasurer, Dr. Renee McLaughlin
- IX. Strategic Initiative Group Updates
 - Legislative Advocacy..... Commissioners Erin Knott and Anthony Williams
 - Community Engagement.....Commissioners Brandon Shamoun, Al Gray and Diane Kreger
 - Strategic Operations.....Commissioners Dr. Renee McLaughlin
- X. Old & New Business Administrative Chair, Raúl Hernández-Guzmán
 - Old Business: Signature Event & Ad-hoc Committee
 - New Business: Bylaws & 2025 Open Public Meeting
- XI. Presentations
 - “A Michigan that Represent Us All” by Head of Engagement of Appointment Division,
Sumaiya Ahmed Sheikh
 - “Michigan Global Talent Initiative” by Workforce Development and Training
Coordinator, Roger Tijerina
- XII. Public Comments.....
- XIII. Announcements
- XIV. Adjournment.....



Meeting Minutes

August 9th, 2024 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM (EST)

Timothy J. Nelson Innovation Center & Library | Northwestern Michigan College Building
1701 E Front St. Traverse City, MI 49686

ATTENDANCE

Present:

- Al Gray
- Angela Gabridge
- Anthony Williams
- Audra Wilson
- Bishop Bonnie A. Perry
- Brandon Shamoun, Vice Chair
- Diane Kreger
- Erin Knott
- Kevin Nguyen
- Lacey Mandoka
- Laurie Bechhofer
- Raúl Hernández-Guzmán, Administrative Chair
- Dr. Renee McLaughlin, Treasurer
- Dr. Tonya Griffith, Trustee

Absent:

- Dani Woods

In-Person Attendance - Office of Global Michigan (OGM) Staff:

- Mika Mcaskill, Commissions Administrative Manager (OGM)

Virtual Attendance - Office of Global Michigan (OGM) Staff:

- Poppy Sias Hernandez, Executive Director, OGM & Chief Equity & Inclusion Officer, Governor's Office

Community Partners Present:

- Katy Knight, Student Life Office Manager, Northwestern Michigan College
- Denny Nguyen, Pride Advisor at Northwestern Michigan College
- Syd Richardson, Student at Northwestern Michigan College
- KT Mandoka, Program Manager for Great Lakes Pride
- Tracy Hobbs, School Psychologist and Co-Chair of Retirement Interest Group

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Administrative Chair Raúl Hernández-Guzmán at 10:01 AM EST.

III. ROLL CALL & DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Executive Secretary Audra Wilson conducted the roll call, confirming a quorum. Administrative Chair Raúl Hernández-Guzmán verified the quorum.

III. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Administrative Chair Raúl Hernández-Guzmán proceeded to read the land acknowledgement reviewed and approved by the State of Michigan Legal Counsel.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA & MEETING MINUTES

The agenda and past meeting minutes were distributed to Commissioners prior to the meeting for review. Vice Chair Brandon Shamoun requested a motion to approve both the agenda and meeting minutes. Commissioner Dr. Renee McLaughlin moved to approve, with Commissioner Bishop Bonnie Perry seconding the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the agenda for the August 9, 2024 meeting, along with the minutes from the Open Public Meetings held on March 22, 2024, and May 10, 2024, as presented. *Motion carries unanimously.*

V. OPENING REMARKS

Poppy Sias Hernandez, Executive Director of the Office of Global Michigan and Chief Equity & Inclusion Officer for the Governor's Office, welcomed the Commission to its third open public meeting. She emphasized the importance of strategic planning, continuity in the Commission's work, and the need to intentionally recognize the significant efforts and progress made by the LGBTQ+ Commission. ED Hernandez also acknowledged the active involvement of the Commissioners in community engagement efforts during Pride Month. She also emphasized the importance of focusing on the 'how,' building strong relationships, and maintaining a steadfast commitment to the work ahead.

VI. OFFICE OF GLOBAL MICHIGAN (OGM) UPDATE

Mika Mcaskill, Commissions Administrative Manager, provided updates from the Office of Global Michigan, covering the following key points:

- **Inclusive Impact Conference at MSU:** Highlighted efforts to amplify the visibility of all Commissions.
- **BLAC Policy Recommendations Overview:** Presented key policy recommendations.
- **OGM Collaboration:** Discussed need for partnerships with agencies serving LGBTQ+ immigrants and refugees.
- **Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan (HLCOM) Profiles Enumeration Study:** Provided an overview of the study's focus.

VII. COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Commission Administrative Chair Raúl Hernández-Guzmán, provided an overview of key milestones, including:

Administrative Updates:

- **State Email Accounts:** All Commissioners are now set up with official State of Michigan email accounts.
- **Business Cards and Branded Merchandise:** All Commissioners received official business cards and t-shirts featuring the LGBTQ+ logo and a QR code to our site.
- **Website Updates:** Our website now includes open public meeting information, ensuring compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act.
- **Meeting Minutes:** Minutes from previous public meetings have been reviewed by both the Administrative Chair and Executive Secretary, Audra Wilson.
- **Streamlined Travel Reimbursement:** A new internal process for travel reimbursement requests has been established, with Vice Chair Brandon Shamoun assisting by co-creating an instructional video.

Events:

- **June Pride Events:** The LGBTQ+ Commission participated in 13 Pride events, achieving an impressive 84% engagement rate from Commissioners. These events included, but were not limited to:
 - Abigail's Pride in Ortonville, Pop Up Pride in the Park in Mt Pleasant, Ferndale Pride, LGBTQ+ Keweenaw Pridefest, Detroit and Grand Rapids Pride Flag Raising Ceremonies, Marquette Pridefest, Motor City Detroit Pride, Michigan State Police Pride, Lansing Pride, Grand Rapids Pride, Flint Pride and the Pride Reception at the Governor's Residence.
- **July & August Events:** The Commission has been active in Royal Oak and Ann Arbor Pride, with participation from Executive Secretary Audra Wilson and Commissioner Lacey Mandoka, at Great Lakes Bay Pride on August 17th, 2024.
- **State of Michigan Ethnic Commissions' Community Reception:** Held in Grand Rapids on June 21st at Grand Valley State University.
- **MSU Inclusive Impact Conference:** On July 10th & 11th, the Commission Administration Team, along with Executive Director and Chief Equity & Inclusion Officer Poppy Hernandez, participated in a plenary panel highlighting the work of OGM in advancing equity and inclusion. Administrative Chair Raúl Hernández-Guzmán was also part of a panel discussion, *Protecting Our Pride: Advocacy for LGBTQIA2S+ Communities*, alongside notable panelists such as Emme Zennoti, Community Director at Equality Michigan, and Ben Dowd, Co-founder and Chair of Lansing Pride. Commissioners Laurie Bechhofer and Lacey Mandoka were also in attendance at the conference.

Projects:

- **Pride Month Video:** The OGM Communication Team is finalizing a video promoting Pride Month, with an update to be shared soon. Special thanks to Commission's Vice Chair Brandon Shamoun, Treasurer Dr. Renee McLaughlin, and Trustee Dr. Tonya Griffith for their contributions to the video.

VIII. TREASURER REPORT

Treasurer Dr. Renee McLaughlin reported that the Commission has utilized approximately 76% of its allocated budget, leaving 24% remaining for the remainder of the 2023-2024 fiscal year, ending in September 2024.

Dr. McLaughlin also highlighted that the current budget allows for only \$190 per commissioner for all travel expenses. She emphasized the need for a more robust budget in 2025, particularly to support travel to the Upper Peninsula (UP), to increase commission's representation and better service to the region's taxpayers and citizens.

IX. STRATEGIC INITIATIVE GROUP (SIG) UPDATES

Commission Administrative Chair Raúl Hernández-Guzmán, invited the leaders of each Strategic Initiative Group (SIG) to provide updates.

Advocacy SIG Updates

Leaders: Erin Knott and Anthony Williams

Co-Leader Anthony Williams, shared that the Advocacy SIG has been actively working to enhance the Commission's capacity for advocacy and education, focusing on identifying legislative policy priorities for both the upcoming Lame Duck session and the 2025 legislative session. Key actions include:

- **Internal Survey:** Development of a survey to assess Commissioners' understanding of the Michigan Legislature, the legislative process, and the rules governing advocacy and education.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engaging with key LGBTQ+ and allied stakeholders to discuss priority legislation and policy proposals, with the intention of creating a comprehensive briefing summary for Commissioners to ensure alignment and preparedness.
- **Preparation for Lame Duck Session:** The Advocacy SIG aims to ensure the Commission is well-positioned to advocate for critical legislation expected to advance during the Lame Duck session. Additionally, the Advocacy SIG may take additional steps, such as drafting resolutions in support of specific legislative or policy initiatives.

Engagement SIG Updates

Leaders: Angela Gabridge and Al Gray

Participants: Vice Chair Brandon Shamoun, Commissioners Diane Kreger, Engagement SIG Leader Angela Gabridge, and Co-Leader Al Gray

- **Vice Chair Brandon Shamoun:** Delivered a comprehensive report on Pride festival activities, summarizing commissioner participation, key outcome, and recognized key community partners.
- **Commissioner Diane Kreger:** Discussed the need to evaluate public remarks for future events to create a more impactful narrative that can resonate with the LGBTQ+ Community. She also highlighted the need to build community partnerships through key conversations with community leaders and stakeholders.
- **Engagement SIG Co-Leader Al Gray:** Provided updates on events and initiatives centered around the Upper Peninsula (UP), emphasizing the UP community's growing demand for tailored LGBTQ+ programs,

dedicated spaces, and activities that foster inclusivity and support. Additionally, she underscored the critical need for expanded access to LGBTQ+ healthcare, particularly transgender care and mental health services.

- **Engagement SIG Leader Angela Gabridge:** Discussed the partnership with MiGen and ongoing efforts to strengthen connections with the LGBTQ+ Community Centers Network. Commissioner Angela Gabridge emphasized the importance of gathering community feedback to better understand their needs and expectations from events. She also highlighted the commission's focus on fostering meaningful collaborations with organizations already playing a pivotal role in supporting the LGBTQ+ community
- **All Participants:** Reflected on the Governor's Residence event, elaborating on its impact and the engagement with attendees.

Operations SIG Updates

Leaders: Dr. Renee McLaughlin and Lacey Mandoka

Participants: Leader Dr. Renee McLaughlin, Commissioner Laurie Bechhofer, Commissioner Dr. Tonya Griffith.

- **Leader Dr. Renee McLaughlin:** Emphasized that the purpose of the Operations SIG is to support and enhance the broader work of the Commission. She highlighted key initiatives in progress, including a community survey that is currently being revised to better align with the Commission's goals. The survey aims to protect the privacy of LGBTQ+ community members who choose to participate.
- **Commissioner Laurie Bechhofer:** Acknowledged the Operations SIG's significant work on developing a land acknowledgment, which the Commission plans to use at the start of public meetings. This effort aims to foster inclusivity, particularly for Two-Spirit tribal communities.
- **Commissioner Dr. Tonya Griffith:** Stressed the importance of safeguarding the identities of individuals who participate in the community survey, ensuring their confidentiality and protection.

X. OLD AND NEW BUSINESS

Administrative Chair Raúl Hernández-Guzmán proceeded to review the Commission's old and new business.

Old Business

Administrative Chair Raúl Hernández-Guzmán, reminded everyone that during the previous open public meeting, the Commission voted to create a signature event focused on **Talent Retention and Attraction**, designed as an opportunity for professional development and career advancement within the LGBTQ+ community. The goal of this event is to break the "Lavender Ceiling," helping LGBTQ+ individuals overcome barriers to career progression. The plan is to organize a **Summit or Conference in Spring 2025**, where external organizations from sectors such as Corporate, Non-Profits, Higher Education, Small Business, and more can engage with Michigan's local talent to discuss career opportunities. Expert guest speakers will be invited to cover topics including managing stereotypes, biases, and overcoming barriers to advancement.

Administrative Chair Raúl Hernández-Guzmán, stated that to move forward, an **Ad-Hoc Committee** needed to be formed to oversee the planning and execution of this event. While no vote was held at this time, commissioners interested in leading the initiative were invited to express their interest. He also mentioned that the Engagement SIG recommended appointing a **Chair and Co-Chair** for decision-making authority and an **Event Champion**—a **Padrino (Godfather) or Madrina (Godmother)** from within OGM, to act as a sponsor and guide the commission to ensure the event's success. Finally, Administrative Chair, also mentioned that considering the Engagement SIG's involvement in over 13 events during Pride Month, they were seeking support from other commissioners, extending an invitation for commissioner's participation in the Ad-Hoc Committee for this signature event.

New Business

Administrative Chair Raúl Hernández-Guzmán, shared that at the next open public meeting in November, the Commission will review and vote on the dates and times for hosting the 2025 Open Public Meetings. To facilitate this process, a survey will be distributed to gather commissioners' preferred months and dates. Based on this year's success in achieving quorum, he recommended continuing to schedule meetings on **Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**, and to maintain the meeting months of **March, May, August, and November**. No vote was taken at this time, and the floor was opened for comments and discussion.

- Commissioner **Bonnie Perry** requested clarification on the selection of the event champion, to which Administrative Chair **Raúl Hernández-Guzmán** clarified that the champion is still to be determined.
- Commissioner **Dr. Renee McLaughlin** emphasized the importance of considering Northeast Michigan and the Upper Peninsula for next year's open public meetings, suggesting a strategic, multi-year rotational approach to ensure the Commission's presence in diverse regions.
- Commissioner **Tonya Griffith** expressed her support for Dr. McLaughlin's proposal, advocating for the Commission to visit new cities in the coming years to ensure broader representation across the state.
- **Mika McAskill**, Commissions Administrative Manager, suggested a more strategic approach by incorporating town halls, listening sessions, or community mixers in the cities where the Commission holds meetings. She proposed developing a multi-purpose, five-year plan for open public meetings as a thoughtful strategy.
- Commissioner **Angela Gabridge** underscored the importance of maximizing community engagement opportunities when allocating resources for the Commission's travel.
- Vice Chair **Brandon Shamoun** highlighted the need to consider nearby towns when traveling to metro areas like Detroit and to prioritize locations with little to no LGBTQ+ representation, aiming to build new relationships with underserved communities.
- Administrative Chair **Raúl Hernández-Guzmán** added that exploring venues beyond higher education institutions for future open public meetings is essential for fostering stronger community ties.
- Commissioner **Bishop Bonnie Perry** offered access to any Episcopal Church in Michigan as potential venues for future meetings.

After hearing no further comments, Administrative Chair Hernández-Guzmán concluded the review of Old and New Business. He then welcomed **Sumaiya Ahmed Sheikh**, Head of Engagement for the Appointments Division, to present "*A Michigan That Represents Us All.*"

XI. PRESENTATIONS

Sumaiya Ahmed Sheikh, Head of Engagement for the Appointments Division, delivered a presentation titled "*A Michigan That Represents Us All.*" She highlighted that the State of Michigan has over 250 Boards and Commissions, and outlined the process for community members to be considered for appointments. Sumaiya encouraged attendees to visit the official website, [Michigan.gov/commissions](https://michigan.gov/commissions), to review current openings and apply, emphasizing the importance of ensuring diverse voices are represented across these governing bodies.

Workforce Development and Training Coordinator, **Roger Tijerina** was not present to deliver the "*Michigan Global Talent Initiative*" presentation due to an illness.

XII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Administrative Chair Hernández-Guzmán, opened the floor for public comments.

Comments

- **Sid Richardson**, an alumnus of Northwestern Michigan College and former President of the Pride Club, shared her experiences as a young queer person currently pursuing a Social Work program at Ferris State University. Sid expressed her admiration for the Commission's work and her eagerness to engage in future initiatives aimed at LGBTQ+ youth. She emphasized the importance of incorporating fun marketing materials, such as stickers, to better connect with and attract younger LGBTQ+ demographics.
- **Jay Kaplan**, Staff Attorney for the ACLU of Michigan's LGBTQ+ Project, provided insights on Title IX Civil Rights Law from the Biden Administration, which prohibits discrimination in schools receiving government funding. He clarified that LGBTQ+ students are protected under Title IX, stating that denying transgender students access to restrooms that align with their gender identity constitutes a violation of this law. Jay discussed the challenges of enforcing these new regulations, particularly due to lawsuits from certain states opposing these protections, although he noted that Michigan is not one of those states. He highlighted the activities of political groups like "Moms for Liberty," which are currently campaigning to ban books addressing gender identity and are challenging supportive policies for LGBTQ+ students. Jay stressed the importance of staying informed about current issues, regulations, programs, and civil rights laws to ensure the protection of LGBTQ+ youth in schools.

XIII. COMMISSIONERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Administrative Chair Hernández-Guzmán, opened the floor for commissioners' announcements.

- **Commissioner Erin Knott** shared that Equality Michigan has launched an educational campaign focused on Title IX and its impact. She invited the community to visit Equality Michigan’s website to learn more. Erin also highlighted the organization’s outreach efforts, noting that they have knocked on over 100,000 doors. To support their growing volunteer program, they are expanding by hiring a few 1099 employees. She extended an invitation for anyone interested in supporting Equality Michigan’s initiatives to connect with her.
- **Commissioner Anthony Williams** announced that Corktown Health, in collaboration with several organizations across Michigan, is working to increase resources for the LGBTQ+ community to address health disparities. He mentioned that funding is available for organizations addressing broad community issues such as transportation, housing, mental health, and more. The coalition offers grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$40,000. Anthony encouraged those interested to visit corktownhealth.org to learn more about the application process.
- **Commissioner and Executive Secretary Audra Wilson** shared that the Great Lakes Pride Event has been rescheduled and invited commissioners to attend. She also highlighted her participation in the Women’s Equality Day virtual panel discussion, organized by the Michigan Women’s Commission.
- **Commissioner Laurie Bechhofer** discussed Public Act 57 of 2023, which mandates the Michigan Department of Education to collaborate with sexual violence organizations. Together, they have developed a “Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Information Guide” that will be distributed to students in grades 6 through 12 across Michigan schools.
- **Commissioner and Vice Chair Brandon Shamoun** provided information on upcoming events, including “Transgender Pride in the Park” on August 24th in Ferndale, and the “Michigan Student Voter Summit” at Wayne State University on September 20th. He also reminded the community about the upcoming election on November 5th, encouraging everyone to register and explore the various voting options.
- **Commissioner Bishop Bonnie Perry** shared a powerful experience from a recent event where she preached on pride and the protection of LGBTQ+ youth. In front of a gathering of 500 faith community members, a father of a transgender child shared how safe and accepted he felt in a church where LGBTQ+ issues were acknowledged, and where all Christians were welcome.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

Commission Administrative Chair Raúl Hernández-Guzmán, invited Vice Chair Brandon Shamoun to adjourn the meeting.

Motion made by Commissioner Kevin Nguyen and seconded by Commissioner and Executive Secretary Audra Wilson. The Commission adjourned. *Motion carries unanimously.*

Meeting adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Audra Wilson

X _____

Audra Wilson

Commission Secretary

Raúl Hernández-Guzmán

X _____

Raúl Hernández-Guzmán

Commission Chair