

**MINUTES OF THE
MARYLAND STEM CELL RESEARCH COMMISSION**
Monday, January 8, 2024
Virtual Meeting

Members:

Mary Armanios
Scott Bailey, Vice Chair
Mamta Gautam-Basak
Diane Hoffmann, Chair
Margaret Conn Himelfarb
Linda Powers
Debra Mathews
David Mosser
Barbara Nsiah
Avram Reisner
Ira Schwartz
Curt Van Tassell

Staff:

Ben Antebi, MSCRF
Ruchika Nijhara, MSCRF
Sabrina Spinner, MSCRF

The Commission meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m.

The Commission welcomed and introduced new Commission Member, Dr. Mamta Gautam-Basak, Senior Director of Regulatory Affairs CMC at BridgeBio. Dr. Gautam-Basak has been appointed by the Governor to fill a patient advocate seat on the Commission. Dr. Gautam-Basak expressed her willingness to serve.

I. Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the November 6, 2023 meeting. A motion was made and seconded to approve the meeting minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Executive Director Report

Dr. Ruchika Nijhara presented the Executive Director's Report, which focused on the following:

A. 2023 Annual Report

The 2023 Annual Report is complete, and a digital copy is available for download on the MSCRF website. ([2023 MSCRF Annual Report](#)). Dr. Nijhara mentioned that MSCRF worked with TEDCO's Government Affairs team to provide copies of the Annual Report to key legislators. Additionally, MSCRF broadly disseminated the digital copy of the shared Annual Report through its Newsletter.

B. MSCRF Program Metrics

Dr. Antebi highlighted key metrics from the 2023 MSCRF Annual Report.

C. New Commissioner Recommendations

Dr. Nijhara contacted the Governor's Appointment Office with recommendations to fill the vacancy for an expert of biomedical ethics as it relates to religion. Dr. Nijhara will keep the Commission informed.

D. Fiscal Year 2025 Legislative Session

The Legislative Session for fiscal year (FY) 2025 has begun. MSCRF is projected to maintain the same level of funding as FY2024 in FY2025, which is \$20.5 million. TEDCO and MSCRF are invited to testify before the House Subcommittee on February 8, 2024, and before the Senate Subcommittee on February 12, 2024, in support of the budget hearing. Dr. Nijhara will be present and will keep the Commission informed on new details regarding the MSCRF annual budget and any relevant bills that will be discussed before the Senate and House Subcommittees.

E. Scientific Review Officer - Update

The contracted Scientific Review Officer (SRO) has opted not to renew the service contract following the March 2024 review cycle. Dr. Nijhara is currently in negotiations with a reputable company, American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS), to provide SRO services going forward. Dr. Nijhara will keep the Commission informed of the outcome.

F. TEDCO Relocation

TEDCO is relocating to a new office in Columbia, MD located near the Merriweather Post Pavilion. The space is currently being configured to accommodate staff and will not be available until May 2024. In the interim, TEDCO has moved into a temporary office until May 2024. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

The meeting adjourned at 3:32 p.m.