

**MINUTES OF THE
MARYLAND STEM CELL RESEARCH COMMISSION**
Monday, March 3, 2025
10490 Little Patuxent Pkwy, Columbia, MD 21044

Members:

Rachel Brewster, Chair
Margaret Conn Himelfarb
Mamta Gautam-Basak
Diane Hoffmann
Debra Mathews
David Moser
Barbara Nsiah
Linda Powers
Avram Reisner
Ira Schwartz
Curt Van Tassell

Staff:

Ruchika Nijhara, MSCRF
Troy LeMaile-Stovall, TEDCO
Ben Antebi, MSCRF
Sabrina Spinner, MSCRF

Guest:

Stephen Chang, PhD, Cell One Partners
Roger Austin, Cyber MD, Chair

The Commission meeting was called to order at 12:31 p.m.

I. Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Commission reviewed the minutes from January 27, 2025. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Guest Presentations

Cyber Maryland Program

Mr. Roger Austin, *Chair of the Cyber Maryland Program*, provided an overview of the initiative and highlighted some upcoming operational strategies. The Program was established in 2023 to address the cybersecurity talent gap in Maryland. The program aims to foster collaboration among employers, educators, and job seekers in the field.

Current State of Art for Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine

Dr. Stephen Chang, a strategic Advisor in Cell and Gene Therapy from Cell One Partners, provided an overview of advancements in stem cell research, gene and cell therapy, tissue engineering, and xenotransplantation. Dr. Chang highlighted the evolution of the field, key challenges in manufacturing and delivery, and emerging technologies driving innovation. Dr. Chang emphasized the growing impact of iPSC technology, CAR-T therapies, and regenerative medicine, along with the need for improved manufacturing processes, cost-effective treatments, and regulatory advancements.

III. Executive Director Report

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

A. FY'26 Legislative Budget Hearings and meetings with the legislators -

Dr. Nijhara provided a concise overview of the House and Senate budget hearings held in mid-February, highlighting the testimonies given by herself, a patient, and MSCRF-funded companies, all of which were well-received by the legislators. She also summarized her meetings with individual legislators, which were instrumental in helping them to understand and appreciate the impact of MSCRF funding on Maryland's economy and its critical role in improving and saving human lives. Dr. Nijhara expressed her gratitude to the Commissioners for their supportive letters and noted that many MSCRF awardees also demonstrated their support for MSCRF by providing written testimony to the legislators. Mr. Troy LeMaile-Stovall followed with an overview of the proposed FY'26 operating budget for TEDCO, outlining the State budget cycle and current priorities. Dr. Nijhara will continue to keep the Commission informed on new details regarding the MSCRF annual budget and any relevant bills before the Senate and House Subcommittees.

B. Update on R2 2025 Funding Cycle

The current funding cycle elicited 101 applications from a range of Maryland academic institutions and biotech companies based in Maryland. Each application was reviewed for compliance by MSCRF staff, and all met the requirements outlined in the RFAs. To efficiently handle the review process in light of the increased volume of applications, around 10 new reviewers have been recruited. The application review meeting is scheduled for mid-March. Following the meeting, all summary statements will be prepared and shared with the full Commission before the May 2025 MSCRC review meeting.

C. 2nd Stem Cell & Regenerative Medicine Tech Showcase

The 2024 Stem Cell & Regenerative Medicine Tech Showcase, organized in collaboration with the Maryland Dept. of Commerce, received very positive feedback. The event provided a great platform for both companies and academic researchers to connect with investors, fostering networking opportunities within the science sector/community. Plans are underway to host the event again in collaboration with the MD Dept. of Commerce on April 29, 2025 (2 pm – 6.30 pm) at the Rita Rossi Colwell Center, in Baltimore, MD. Efforts are ongoing to secure speakers and to finalize logistics. Dr. Nijhara extended an invitation to the Commissioners to attend the event.

D. MSCRF Commissioner Hoffmann's recognition by Daily Record

Commissioner Diane Hoffmann has been recognized by The Daily Record and the Maryland State Bar Association as one of the 2025 honorees for top legal educators in Maryland. The award ceremony will take place on April 8, 2025, at the Hilton BWI Hotel.

IV. Discussion on the Scope of the MSCRF Commercialization Grant Program

The Commission discussed and reached a consensus to maintain the current level of funding for Commercialization grants, regardless of the development stage of the applicant company.

V. Statement for Closing the Meeting

A motion was made and seconded that the Commission go into closed session. The motion stated the following:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY TO CLOSE SESSION

General Provisions Article §3-103(a)(1)(i):

This subtitle does not apply to . . . a public body when it is carrying out . . . an administrative function.

TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED:

Review of operational considerations impacting the administration of the MSCRF.

REASONS FOR CLOSING:

The Commission believes that the aforementioned administrative matters do not fall within the scope of the coverage of the Open Meetings Act.

The motion passed unanimously. The Commission went into a closed session at 2:58 p.m.

Topics Discussed: During the closed session, the Commission discussed operational considerations for MSCRF.

Summary of Actions Taken: None.

Meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m.