Approved July 13, 2026

MINUTES OF THE
MARYLAND STEM CELL RESEARCH COMMISSION
Monday, June 15, 2026
(Virtual Meeting)

Members:
Scott Bailey, Vice Chair
Rachel Brewster, Chair
Margaret Conn Himelfarb
Christopher Dreisbach
Mamta Gautam-Basak
Diane Hoffmann
David Moser
Barbara Nsiah
Linda Powers
Alan Regenberg
Avram Reisner
Ira Schwartz
David Valle
Curt Van Tassell

Staff:
Ruchika Nijhara, MSCRF
Ben Antebi, MSCRF
Sabrina Spinner, MSCRF
Jigita Patel, OAG

The Commission meeting was called to order at 12:04 p.m.

I. Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Commission reviewed the meeting minutes from the May 11, 2026, Commission meeting. A motion was made and seconded to approve the meeting minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Executive Director's Report

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

A. <u>FY26 R2 Funding Cycle Metrics</u>
In a brief overview, Dr. Nijhara indicated that 38 awards totaling approximately $13.1 million were approved during the FY26 R2 funding cycle. Following the withdrawal of one launch award, the available funds were reallocated to a Commercialization application in reserve status, resulting in almost all of FY26 funds being allocated.

B. <u>FY27 R1 Funding Cycle Timeline</u>
- The FY27 R1 RFAs have been released for five funding programs (Clinical, Launch, Validation, Commercialization, and Manufacturing Assistance).
- The application deadline is June 23, 2026,

- The Scientific Peer Review scheduled for July 28-30, 2026. Given the large number of newly recruited scientific reviewers, staff will work with the scientific review officer (SRO) to conduct a reviewer orientation prior to the review assignments to reinforce confidentiality requirements, especially around AI, and review expectations.
- The Commission Review Meeting will follow in mid-September 2026.

C. <u>**Upcoming Conferences & Events**</u>

Dr. Nijhara indicated participation, collaboration and/or attendance for the following conferences on behalf of the Commission and the Fund:

- <u>Bio International Convention</u>: June 22-25,2026 in San Diego, CA
- <u>ISSCR Annual Conference</u>: July 8-11, 2026 in Montreal, Canada

- Planning is underway for the **MSCRF 20th Anniversary/Annual Felicitation Ceremony**, scheduled September 30, 2026 at the UM-BioPark MLK4, located in Baltimore, MD. This event will recognize the FY26 awardees and celebrate two decades of MSCRF's impact on stem cell research in Maryland, while highlighting the accomplishments of MSCRF-funded investigators. Commissioners are encouraged to attend. Additional details will be shared in the coming months.

III. FY27 3% COLA Request for MSCRF Staff

The Commission discussed a proposed 3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for the MSCRF staff, noting that the proposed increase is consistent with the recent COLA adjustments provided to Maryland Technology Development Corporation's employees. The Commissioners acknowledged the team's workload and overall performance and expressed support for the proposed adjustment. A motion was made and seconded to approve the 3% COLA for the MSCRF staff, effective July 1, 2026. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Nominations for Commission Chair and Vice Chair

The Commission discussed leadership for the upcoming term. By acclimation, Dr. Rachel Brewster was reappointed to serve as Commission Chair for an additional two-year term. A motion was made and seconded to appoint Ms. Margaret Conn-Himelfarb as Vice Chair. The motion was approved unanimously. Both Commissioners expressed their willingness to serve.

Dr. David Valle was nominated as a *potential* co-Vice Chair. He requested additional time to consider serving and discussion was deferred to a future meeting.

V. Formation of Temporary Working Groups

<u>**Hiring & Nominations Working Group**</u>:

The Commission approved the formation of a temporary working group to address matters related to administrative staffing, commissioner nominations, and staff compensation. The working group will be established for an initial 9-month term with an option to extend if needed. A motion was made and seconded to establish the Hiring & Nominations working group. The motion passed unanimously.

The following Commissioners volunteered to serve: Ms. Margaret Conn-Himelfarb, Mr. Ira Schwartz, Ms. Diane Hoffmann, Dr. David Mosser, Dr. Rachel Brewster, and Dr. David Valle.

Strategic Planning Working Group
The Commission approved the formation of a temporary working group to address legislative strategy, governance, and other relevant strategic matters. The working group will be established for an initial 9-month term with an option to extend if needed. A motion was made and seconded to establish the Strategic Planning working group. The motion passed unanimously.

The following Commissioners volunteered to serve: Dr. Rachel Brewster, Ms. Margaret Conn-Himelfarb, Mr. Ira Schwartz, and Dr. Avram Reisner. Additional Commissioners are welcome to participate if interested.

VI. 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:

The discussion will concern a review of operational and related 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 coverage of the Open Meetings Act.

The motion passed unanimously. The Commission went into a closed session at **1:02 p.m.** Only the following Commission members attended the Closed Session: Commissioners Bailey, Brewster, Conn-Himmelfarb, Dreisbach, Hoffman, Mosser, Nsiah, Powers, Regenberg, Reisner, Schwartz, Valle, and Van Tassell, joined at 1:35 pm by Commissioner Gautam-Basak. The following staff were also in attendance at the closed session: Ruchika Nijhara, Ben Antebi and Sabrina Spinner. Jigita Patel was not present during closed session.

Topics Discussed: The Commission then discussed various administrative matters related to MSCRF's operations. No actions were taken during the Closed Session.

Meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.