



**CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH &
PROTECTION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council

**Tuesday, July 14, 2026
9:00am – 10:30am**

MINUTES

Members:

Subha Chandar (Chair)
Ben Gitterman
Frederick Banks (Vice Chair)
Nse Witherspoon
Megan Weil Latshaw
Alexander Lehmann
Laura Allen
John Hummel
Lisa Horne
Matthew McConaughy

Kylan Simpson (Staff)

Guests:

Michael Ichniowski
Kelly Love
Sean Lynch
Veronika Carella
Krisna Becker
Semaj Tucker
Ashley Prescott
Anaiah Coates
Mackenzie Smith
Nomsa Dlamini
Cliff Mitchell

Welcome

Vice Chair Frederick Banks called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and welcomed Council members, agency representatives, Maryland Department of Health staff, invited guests, and members of the public. Vice Chair Banks presided over the meeting in the absence of Chair Subha Chandar. He confirmed that Council members had received the meeting agenda and noted that the meeting would focus on updates regarding the Council's ongoing work on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in schools, the Maryland Department of Health's Environmental Justice Strategic Plan, and an overview of Maryland's Open Meetings Act requirements.

Old Business

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

The Council reviewed the draft meeting minutes from the June 9, 2026 meeting.

Matthew McConaughey (Maryland Association of Counties Representative) moved to approve the June 9, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. Alexander Lehmann (Maryland Department of Agriculture) seconded the motion.

Vice Chair Banks asked whether there were any corrections or discussion regarding the minutes. Hearing none, the motion carried by unanimous consent.

Update on Motion #3 (2021) – Pesticide Use in Schools

Status of MSDE/MDA Coordination

Vice Chair Frederick Banks provided an update on the Council's ongoing collaboration with the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to strengthen implementation of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices in Maryland schools.

Dr. Banks reported that representatives from MDE, MDA, and MSDE recently met to discuss opportunities to improve statewide coordination and education surrounding school IPM programs. The group identified administrator engagement as one of the primary challenges to successful implementation and discussed strategies for expanding outreach beyond school IPM coordinators to include school administrators, facilities personnel, and other decision-makers. The group also discussed utilizing existing MSDE facilities planner meetings as an opportunity to provide statewide training to local education agencies.

Dr. Banks explained that the discussion also highlighted the need to involve additional state agencies, including the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and other MDE programs, to ensure that future guidance adequately addresses issues involving wildlife protection, water resources, and environmental regulations that may affect pesticide management decisions. He noted that the goal is to develop a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach that reflects the differing needs of rural, suburban, and urban school systems.

The working group also discussed developing a standardized reporting dashboard that would allow school IPM coordinators to document pest management challenges, identify emerging issues, and better understand regional differences in pest concerns across Maryland schools. Dr. Banks emphasized that while consistency remains important, the reporting system must also recognize that pest management needs differ significantly across jurisdictions and geographic regions.

Semaj Tucker (Maryland State Department of Education) noted that MSDE's existing facilities planner meetings provide an efficient mechanism for communicating IPM guidance and training to facilities staff and school designers throughout the State. She also clarified MSDE's role in coordinating these meetings and supported continued collaboration among the pn regarding the status of the IPM model plan previously developed for the Maryland Department of Agriculture and asked whether correspondence had been sent to MDA leadership regarding the Council's

recommendations. She also provided an update that she had contacted the Montgomery County Public Schools Superintendent regarding participation in a future CEHPAC meeting but had not yet received a response. Vice Chair Banks offered to follow up directly with the Superintendent using previous correspondence to encourage participation in a future meeting.

Megan Latshaw (Epidemiologist) requested clarification regarding the status of the IPM model plan previously developed for the Maryland Department of Agriculture and asked whether correspondence had been sent to MDA leadership regarding the Council's recommendations. She also provided an update that she had contacted the Montgomery County Public Schools Superintendent regarding participation in a future CEHPAC meeting but had not yet received a response. Vice Chair Banks offered to follow up directly with the Superintendent using previous correspondence to encourage participation in a future meeting.

Public Comment

Veronika Carella emphasized the importance of ensuring that any future IPM template fully addresses all requirements contained in Maryland's 1997 Integrated Pest Management in Schools law. She stated that, while a model plan had previously been developed, the Council had not yet formally reviewed the template currently being used by schools and expressed concern that it may not address all statutory requirements. Carella requested that MDA provide the Council with the current template and an opportunity to review and comment on its contents before implementation.

Kelly Love (Maryland Department of Agriculture) responded that MDA would discuss the request with agency leadership and determine what materials could be shared with the Council. Alexander Lehmann (Maryland Department of Agriculture) added that MDA is currently reviewing the template internally and expects to provide the Council with an update following consultation with agency leadership.

Vice Chair Banks agreed to determine whether a previous version of the template had already been distributed to Council members and stated that, if available, it would be redistributed following the meeting. He also requested that MDA provide an anticipated timeline for completing its internal review and reporting back to the Council.

New Business

MDH Environmental Justice Strategic Plan

Status of Strategic Plan Development

Vice Chair Frederick Banks introduced Dr. Clifford Mitchell, Director of the Maryland Department of Health's Environmental Health Bureau, to provide an update on the development of the Maryland Department of Health's Environmental Justice Strategic Plan.

Dr. Mitchell explained that the strategic plan is being developed as part of Governor Moore's environmental justice initiative and the Department's participation on the Interagency Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities. Although the plan was originally scheduled for completion earlier in the month, additional time was needed to complete stakeholder engagement and internal review. He noted that the draft plan was nearing completion and would undergo both internal and external review before being finalized.

Dr. Mitchell explained that the strategic plan is intended to guide the Department's environmental justice activities through a public health lens by focusing on health outcomes that are influenced by environmental conditions. The draft plan currently includes three primary goals:

- Improve screening, treatment, and care for chronic illnesses associated with environmental exposures, particularly asthma;
- Strengthen program planning and resource allocation by incorporating environmental justice data into departmental decision-making; and
- Improve access to healthy foods and reduce food insecurity among Maryland residents.

Under the first goal, Dr. Mitchell highlighted ongoing efforts to reduce asthma-related emergency department visits, improve asthma management resources for families and schools, expand home visiting programs, and reduce disparities in asthma outcomes among Maryland children.

He also discussed efforts to improve the Department's use of environmental justice data by incorporating equity considerations into the development of Maryland's Climate and Health Profile Report and expanding outreach to communities disproportionately affected by environmental hazards. As part of this work, the Department is exploring opportunities to improve PFAS monitoring, particularly for private drinking water supplies in overburdened communities, building upon previous work conducted in communities such as Nanjemoy. Dr. Mitchell noted that these efforts are being developed in collaboration with the Maryland Department of the Environment and the Maryland Department of Health Laboratories Administration.

Dr. Mitchell concluded by inviting Council members and stakeholders to provide feedback on the draft goals and objectives as the strategic planning process continues.

Council Discussion

Council members discussed opportunities to strengthen the strategic plan and emphasized the importance of ensuring that environmental justice initiatives remain focused on measurable public health outcomes.

Dr. Mitchell explained that the Department intentionally framed the strategic plan around health outcomes because MDH's statutory authority primarily relates to protecting and improving public health rather than regulating environmental exposures. He noted that

while partner agencies, including the Maryland Department of the Environment, Department of Natural Resources, and Maryland Department of Agriculture, maintain regulatory authority over environmental programs, the Department of Health's role is to identify how environmental conditions affect health and implement interventions that improve population health outcomes.

Public Comment

Veronika Carella encouraged the Department to incorporate additional consideration of PFAS contamination associated with pesticide applications and private drinking water supplies into the strategic plan. She referenced groundwater contamination identified near schools served by private wells and asked how the Department intended to address known sources of PFAS contamination through its environmental justice initiatives.

Kelly Love (Maryland Department of Agriculture) responded that the pesticide products referenced by Carella are regulated in accordance with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requirements and clarified that Maryland follows the federal definition of PFAS when evaluating pesticide products. She further stated that pesticide applications are expected to comply with EPA-approved label instructions and that MDA has not identified evidence that applications referenced during the discussion were conducted outside of those requirements.

Michael Ichniowski asked whether recent federal changes affecting PFAS regulations would influence Maryland's plans to expand PFAS testing of drinking water. Dr. Mitchell responded that Maryland's strategic approach would continue regardless of federal regulatory changes and confirmed that the Department intends to proceed with expanding PFAS-related public health activities.

Dr. Mitchell concluded the discussion by encouraging Council members and stakeholders to continue providing recommendations throughout the strategic planning process. He reiterated that the Department's objective is to develop a practical environmental justice strategy that aligns with MDH's statutory responsibilities while improving health outcomes for communities disproportionately affected by environmental hazards.

Open Meetings Act

Vice Chair Frederick Banks introduced Tyra Hudgens, Health Policy Analyst with the Maryland Department of Health's Office of Support Services, to provide an overview of Maryland's Open Meetings Act (OMA) and its application to public advisory bodies.

Hudgens explained that the Open Meetings Act is intended to promote government transparency and accountability by requiring public bodies to conduct meetings openly, provide advance public notice of meetings, and maintain publicly accessible meeting minutes and records. She reviewed key provisions of the Act, including the definition of a public body, quorum requirements, meeting notice and agenda requirements, public access to meetings, minutes retention requirements, and the limited circumstances under which a public body may convene in closed session. She also encouraged Council

members to complete the Attorney General's online Open Meetings Act training and retain their certificates of completion.

Hudgens concluded by reviewing resources available through the Office of the Attorney General, including the Open Meetings Act Manual, Frequently Asked Questions, compliance checklists, and the required online training course. At the request of Vice Chair Banks, she agreed to provide the presentation slides for distribution to Council members following the meeting.

Council Discussion

Council members thanked Hudgens for the presentation. No additional Council discussion followed.

Public Comment

Veronika Carella expressed concern regarding the recent removal of historical meeting minutes, presentations, and supporting documents from the CEHPAC webpage. She noted that these materials provide important historical context for the Council's work and requested that public access to archived meeting materials be restored whenever possible. Carella emphasized that access to these documents supports the Council's statutory responsibilities to educate the public, review environmental health issues, and promote transparency.

Dr. Clifford Mitchell explained that the temporary removal of documents resulted from a department-wide effort to comply with new federal digital accessibility requirements. He stated that the Maryland Department of Health is reviewing thousands of PDF documents to ensure they meet accessibility standards before they can be republished online. Dr. Mitchell acknowledged the importance of maintaining public access to Council records and explained that archived documents remain available upon request while they undergo accessibility review. He added that the Department is prioritizing restoration of high-value documents as resources allow.

Vice Chair Banks thanked Hudgens for her presentation and the discussion concluded.

Public Comment

Vice Chair Frederick Banks opened the floor for general public comment.

Veronika Carella requested that the comments she provided throughout the meeting be included in the official meeting minutes as part of the public record. She explained that her remarks regarding Integrated Pest Management, public access to Council documents, and environmental justice reflected the comments she intended to offer during the formal public comment period and asked that they be considered collectively as her public input for the meeting.

No additional public comments were offered.

Adjourn

There being no further business before the Council, Vice Chair Frederick Banks thanked Council members, agency representatives, staff, and members of the public for their participation. He noted that updates regarding the Integrated Pest Management template, the Environmental Justice Strategic Plan, and other ongoing Council initiatives would be provided at future meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:30 a.m.