

Maryland Pediatric Cancer Research Commission

Ad Hoc Meeting

Thursday, February 26, 2026 · 2:00 – 3:00pm

Virtual Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees

Members in Attendance:

Dana Christo
Ruth Hoffman
Beth Siever
John Shern
Piotr Walczak
Curt Civin
Aziza Shad
Donald Small

Members Absent:

Elizabeth Kromm
Brigitte Widemann
Michelle Urzynecok
Kathryn Ruble
Jeffrey Dome

Commission Staff:

Sadie Peters
Kate Natafgi

Additional Attendees:

Pansy Washington
Tyra Hudgens
Pamela Williams
Jody Sheely
Abenezer Tafese

1. Welcome, Agenda Review, and Roll Call

- a. The meeting was called to order at 2:07 p.m. by Co-chair Ruth Hoffman, who provided an overview of the agenda.
- b. Roll call was conducted. Seven members were present, representing a quorum. Piotr Walczak joined after the roll call.

2. Updates on Legislative Amendment and Proposed New Bill

- a. Ruth Hoffman provided an overview and legislative update on HB 672. She noted that the bill, sponsored by Del. Shetty, was heard in the House Health Committee on Tuesday, February 17, 2026. Testimony was provided by Ruth Hoffman and Don Small. During the hearing, legislators inquired about the status of the associated grant funding and expressed surprise that none of the funds had yet been expended.

Ms. Hoffman also noted that following the hearing, HB 672 was designated as an emergency bill. It passed Second Reading on February 24, 2026 and subsequently passed Third Reading in the House. The bill will next be referred to the Senate Finance Committee upon crossover. Based on current discussions, there are no anticipated issues on the Senate side. As an emergency measure, the bill is expected to take effect July 1, 2026 which should also help streamline certain aspects of the related regulatory process.

- b. Curt Civin provided an overview of House Bill 1576, referred to during the meeting as the “vaping bill,” and requested the Commission’s consideration of a letter of support. HB 1576 proposes an increase in the sales and use tax on vaping liquids, electronic smoking devices, and related products. The intent of the bill is twofold: (1) to decrease vaping—particularly among youth—by raising prices, and (2) to generate new revenue for pediatric cancer research.

- c. Dr. Civin stated that under the bill, revenue generated from the *increased* tax (i.e., new revenue attributable to the tax change) would be allocated to support Maryland pediatric cancer research through the Maryland Pediatric Cancer Fund. Dr. Civin described the proposal as a “win-win” for Maryland and its children, citing both the anticipated public health benefit of reducing injurious vaping and the dedicated funding stream for pediatric cancer research. He noted that the Commission is uniquely positioned to advocate for the bill based on its medical and public health expertise.

- i. Don Small made a motion to approve the letter of support as amended during the meeting. The motion was seconded by Aziza Shad. The letter was approved unanimously by the Council. Curt Civin will be testifying in support of the bill.
- d. Don Small moved that the Commission support the concept of the bill. The motion was seconded by Aziza Shad. There were no objections. The motion passed unanimously.

- e. Dr. Civin then presented a draft letter of support for House Bill 1576 for the Commission's consideration. Members provided feedback and proposed edits during the meeting.
- f. Don Small recommended revising the letter to clarify that the bill allocates only the *increased* revenue generated by the new tax to the Maryland Pediatric Cancer Fund, rather than referencing a general or unspecified amount of revenue. Members agreed this clarification was important to ensure legislators understood that the proposal would not divert or reduce existing state revenue from current vaping taxes.
- g. Ruth Hoffman raised a concern that the letter should clearly articulate the rationale for dedicating vaping tax revenue to pediatric cancer research. In response, Dr. Civin explained that although a direct causal link between vaping and pediatric cancer has not been established, the policy rationale includes addressing gaps in funding from the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement and ensuring pediatric cancer research receives more consistent support. He also emphasized the well-documented harms of vaping to youth, including nicotine addiction and its established pathway to cigarette smoking, reinforcing the broader public health justification.
- h. The group agreed the co-chairs would submit the letter on the Commission's behalf.

3. Public Comment

No public comments

4. Adjournment

Beth Sevier moved that the meeting be adjourned. Don Small seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:02 pm.