



**Maryland Advisory Council on Health and Wellness Council**

**Meeting Minutes**

**January 21, 2026, 4-6:00 PM**

**Members Present**

Pamela R. Williams  
Luke Hollis  
Lindsay Lotter  
Seth S. Martin  
Darryl Heggans  
Aruna Nathan  
Esa Davis  
Mychelle Y. Farmer  
Vaple I. Robinson  
Lusi Martin-Braswell  
Mary Backley  
Jared Meacham  
Crystal N. Bell  
Sam Zisow-McClean  
Jonathan Dayton  
Jeffrey Duong Le  
Marsha Seidelman  
Jonas Nguh  
Tara Clemons Johnson  
Leigh Ann Eagle  
Teresa Titus-Howard  
Cameron Pollock  
Amarachi Uzosike

**Members Absent**

Casey Scott  
Gary Gerstenblith

**MDH Staff Present**

Kate Natafqi  
Nkeiruka Ashiedu  
Christa Thornton  
Brittany Wilson  
Muftau Shinaba  
Ilene Cervantes del Toro  
Ali MacStudy  
Guilmate Fuller  
Tyra Hudgens

**Members of the Public Present**

Heidi Falter

**I. Open Maryland Advisory Council on Health and Wellness**

The minutes from the November 19th meeting were presented for approval. Pamela Williams moved to approve the minutes, and Jonas Nguh seconded the motion; the minutes were approved unanimously.

Pamela Williams provided a leadership update, announcing that Teresa Howard will be stepping down as chair of the Health and Wellness Council. Jonas Nguh was introduced as the new chair. Jonas shared his background as the immediate past president of the



Maryland Public Health Association and director of performance improvement at Springfield Hospital Center.

## **II. Presentation- Open My Heart Foundation**

Dr. Champagne of the Open My Heart Foundation was unavailable due to technical issues.

## **III. Presentation - NourishMD**

Brad Fallon from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development presented on the new Nourish Maryland program, a \$2 million grant initiative aimed at supporting fresh food retailers in designated food deserts across the state. Grants range from \$25,000 to \$150,000 and are intended to support start-up costs, equipment, inventory, and operational expenses for eligible retailers. The program prioritizes year-round operations, with additional support for farmers markets and partnerships with the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Maryland Market Money program. Brad emphasized the importance of spreading awareness about the program and offered to provide materials and resources for council members to share. Questions were addressed regarding funding sources, eligibility, and program sustainability.

## **IV. Committee Updates**

Teresa Howard opened the committee updates portion of the meeting by confirming attendee additions to various committees. Updates were provided by committee representatives as follows:

- **Diabetes Committee:** Sam Zisow-McClean reported that the committee last met on November 11. They reviewed updates on the DSMEES campaign, currently active on LinkedIn and Nextdoor, and discussed the ongoing development of a locator system for evidence-based diabetes programs, now available on the MDH website. The committee also reviewed the latest diabetes data briefs and began work on the 2026 work plan and goals.
- **Heart Disease and Stroke Committee:** Teresa Howard shared that the committee continues finalizing website updates and plans to discuss a potential social media campaign for Heart Month. Heidi Falter joined as a guest member of the public.
- **Physical Fitness Committee:** Cameron Pollock reported that the committee is in the final stages of disseminating a flyer promoting the recommended 150 minutes of weekly physical activity. The flyer is being made fully 508 compliant for broad distribution. Committee members have compiled a list of dissemination channels, including state agencies, local health departments, clinical partners, and community organizations such as sports venues and retailers. MDH Communications is supporting the campaign, and council members were encouraged to assist with dissemination.



**V. Public Comment Period**

No comments.

**VI. Adjournment**

With no further questions, the council formally adjourned at 4:30 PM and transitioned to committee meetings.