

## MICHIGAN CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING

Monday, July 26, 2021 ~ 5:00 P.M.

Virtual Meeting: Zoom web conferencing platform; Livestreamed via You Tube and Facebook

*In compliance with the State of Michigan's Open Meetings Act, "the minutes must show the date, time, place, members present, members absent, any decisions made at a meeting open to the public, and the purpose(s) for which a closed session is held; the minutes must also include all roll call votes taken at the meeting." The minutes are limited to these requirements and do not reflect all subject matter that occurred during the Commission meeting. Meetings are audio recorded and kept on file with the MDCR.*

### MINUTES

PRESENT: Commission Chair Stacie Clayton  
Commission Vice-Chair Zenna Elhasan  
Commission Secretary Ira Combs, Jr.  
Commissioner Richard Corriveau  
Commissioner Regina Gasco-Bentley  
Commissioner Anupama Kosaraju  
Commissioner Gloria Lara  
Commissioner Portia Roberson

#### CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

The meeting of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission was called to order by Chair Clayton at 5:00 P.M.

Chair Clayton welcomed participants to the meeting by way of Zoom web conferencing and Facebook / You Tube livestream platforms.

Roll Call of the Commissioners was taken by Clerk Dan Levy to determine a quorum. Chair Clayton, Vice-Chair Elhasan, Secretary Combs, Commissioner Gasco Bentley, Commissioner Corriveau, Commissioner Kosaraju, Commissioner Lara. With seven of eight Commissioners present, quorum requirements were met. *Commissioner Roberson arrived shortly after the meeting was in progress.*

#### APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA

**MOTION: Move to Approve the Meeting Agenda as submitted.** There was no discussion. **On Motion duly made (Elhasan) and supported (Lara), the Meeting Agenda was Approved.** *Motion carried unanimously.*

#### OPENING MATTERS

##### WELCOME / CHAIR REMARKS

Chair Clayton acknowledged the passing of civil rights icon Robert Parris Moses, indicating these remarks, followed by a call for a moment of silence:

***"Robert Parris Moses, a civil rights activist who was shot at and endured beatings and jail while leading Black voter registration drives in the***

***American South during the 1960s, and later helped to improve minority education in math, died on Sunday morning at the age of 86. Moses, who was widely referred to as 'Bob', worked to dismantle desegregation as a Mississippi field director for the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee during the civil rights movement and was central to the 1964 'Freedom Summer' in which hundreds of students went to the South to register voters. Moses started his 'second chapter in civil rights work' by founding, in 1982, the Algebra Project thanks to a MacArthur Fellowship. The project included a curriculum Moses developed to help students struggling to succeed in Math. 'Bob Moses was a hero of mine. His quiet confidence helped shape the civil rights movement, and he inspired generations of young people looking to make a difference,' said former President Barack Obama."***

#### PUBLIC COMMENT PROTOCOL

Deputy Director Mary Engelman provided instructions to members of the public who wish to address the Commission during the Public Comment segment of the meeting.

***Commissioner Roberson joined the meeting at 5:07 p.m.***

#### ADOPTION OF CONSENT AGENDA

**MOTION: Move to Adopt the Consent Agenda as submitted.** There was no discussion. **On Motion duly made (Combs) and supported (Corriveau), the Consent Agenda was Adopted.** *Motion carried unanimously.*

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MAY 24, 2021 MEETING

**MOTION: Move to Approve the Meeting Minutes as submitted.** There was no discussion. **On Motion duly made (Combs) and supported (Elhasan), the Minutes from the May 24, 2021 Commission Meeting were Approved.** *Motion carried unanimously.*

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JUNE 28, 2021 SPECIAL MEETING

**MOTION: Move to Approve the Meeting Minutes as submitted.** There was no discussion. **On Motion duly made (Elhasan) and supported (Corriveau), the Minutes from the June 28, 2021 Special Meeting were Approved.** *Motion carried unanimously.*

#### GUEST PRESENTATIONS

**PRESENTATION: 31<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act**  
Kimberly Woolridge, Michigan Department of Civil Rights

Ms. Woolridge provided brief remarks, and read the following resolution into the record:

***"Michigan Civil Rights Commission Resolution In Recognition of the Americans with Disabilities Act 31<sup>st</sup> Anniversary:***

**WHEREAS, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990, for the purpose of ensuring the civil rights of people with disabilities; and WHEREAS, the ADA established a national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities by providing protections similar to those afforded to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age and religion; and WHEREAS, the ADA’s anti-discrimination protections apply to public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications; and WHEREAS, the ADA also ensures that people with disabilities are provided with equal access to public places, services, and communications; and WHEREAS, the ADA, along with the 2008 ADA Amendments Act, has expanded opportunities for people with disabilities by reducing barriers, changing perceptions, and increasing their full participation in community life; and WHEREAS, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services estimates that about 28% of people in Michigan, and 41% of those who are 75 years or older, are people with disabilities; and WHEREAS, despite the ADA and other disability and civil rights laws, the COVID crisis has highlighted the obstacles many people with disabilities face when seeking health care; and WHEREAS, unequal access to health care results in people with disabilities facing poorer health outcomes than those who do not have a disability, with 45.7% of adults with disabilities, describing their general health as fair or poor, compared to 8.3% of all people; 44% reporting having depression, compared with 14.8% overall; and 52.0% reporting high blood pressure, compared to 27.0% of people without disabilities; and WHEREAS, it is vital that all Michiganders, including those with disabilities, are given equal access to employment, public service, public accommodations, and telecommunication in our state; and WHEREAS, the full promise of the ADA will only be fulfilled if we remain committed to continuing our efforts to fully implement the ADA. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that on this anniversary of the signing of the ADA, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission recognizes the progress that has been made since the ADA’s adoption, reaffirms the principles of equality and inclusion it stands for, and recommits to working to ensure Michigan achieves full ADA compliance.”**

**BOARD RESOLUTION: To Pass the Resolution recognizing the 31<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.** There was no discussion.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8-0

Clayton - Y	Roberson – Y
Elhasan – Y	Corriveau – Y
Combs - Y	Kosaraju - Y
Gasco-Bentley – Y	Lara - Y

**RESOLUTION UNANIMOUSLY PASSED.**

**PRESENTATION: Special Recognition of Michigan civil rights icon Myrtle Gregg-LaFay, Chair Stacie Clayton**

Chair Clayton called on Mrs. Gregg-LaFay’s son, Mr. Robert LaFay, provided brief remarks, and presented the following resolution:

***“Michigan Civil Rights Commission Resolution In Tribute to Myrtle Louise Gregg-LaFay:***

***WHEREAS, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission (MCRC) sets aside a portion of its meeting on this date to mark the 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); and***

***WHEREAS, it is important that as we pause to acknowledge the 31 years that the ADA has provided protections and ensured access, we also pay tribute to those who worked tirelessly in the decades before its adoption in the efforts to gain protections for the civil rights of persons with disabilities; and***

***WHEREAS, one such person was Myrtle Louise Gregg-LaFay, (known affectionately by her closest friends and collaborators as “Myrt”), who passed away on May 31, 2021; and***

***WHEREAS, Myrtle was a lifelong advocate for disability rights, and spent much of her professional life in service of persons with disabilities; and***

***WHEREAS, Myrtle began her career working for Head Start; first as an early childhood educator of children with disabilities, being named Head Start Teacher of the Year in 1975, and later as a “Handicapped Services Advocate” working to ensure inclusion of students with disabilities in all Michigan programs; and***

***WHEREAS, Myrtle participated in the first White House Conference on the Handicapped (1976-1977), an experience she described as giving her a sense of solidarity with a broader community of people with disabilities, helping her understand the scope of the problems they faced together, and that those problems were not the disabilities themselves, but the rights and access the people with them were being denied; and***

***WHEREAS, Myrtle was a leader of the Michigan Department of Labor’s Commission on Disability (then Handicapper) Concerns, serving as Deputy Director from 1977-1980 and Executive Director from 1980-1987, for which she received a commendation from Governor James Blanchard for her service; and***

***WHEREAS, Myrtle served on the Michigan Civil Service Commission for more than 34 years; and***

***WHEREAS, Myrtle served on the Michigan Disability Rights Coalition’s (MDRC) Board of Directors from 2011 until her passing, and was Board President from 2016-2020; and***

***WHEREAS, Myrtle was instrumental in the Handicapper Advocacy Alliance’s creation of the Center of Handicapper Affairs, (now the Capital Area Center for Independent Living), one of Michigan’s first Centers for Independent Living (CIL), and served on its board of directors; and***

***WHEREAS, Myrtle’s interest in children was obvious and ongoing. She was a volunteer for the MDRC “Her Power, Her Pride” program, which included a camping experience where young women learned to create and enhance a sense of themselves built on strengths and positive images rather than stereotypes and negative images, and where she was known to be happiest just sitting on the ground with the young women facilitating their exercises and sharing her expertise; and***

***WHEREAS, after ‘retirement’ Myrtle, who had always been able to help bring understanding between opposing parties by focusing on what was right, became a certified mediator, settling disputes for the Ingham County court system and the Michigan Disability Rights Coalition; and***

***WHEREAS, fellow disability rights leader and advocate Duncan Wyeth said of Myrtle’s time in service to state government, “We will never be able to count the number of accommodations she single-handedly worked through state bureaucracy to ensure individuals with disabilities had every opportunity to remain in state employment and make contributions;” and***

***WHEREAS, Len Sawisch, a partner in the earliest efforts in Michigan to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities, described Myrtle as: “a teacher, a joiner, a mediator, a manager, an athlete, a photographer, a doting parent, a loyal friend, and most of all, an inspiration for those of us who had the honor to work with her”; and***

*WHEREAS, in response to a question, Myrtle indicated that she hoped to be remembered as a mother, wife, grandmother, aunt and great aunt – an “early advocate in Michigan’s disability movement,” a “good Head Start teacher”, and as “one who didn’t give up.”*

*THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Michigan Civil Rights Commission pays tribute to Myrtle Louise Gregg-LaFay for a lifetime of service to the people of the State of Michigan, and especially to those with disabilities; and*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Michigan Civil Rights Commission honors Myrtle as an early and lifelong advocate and leader in Michigan’s disability rights movement, a good Head Start teacher, and most especially as someone who never gave up.”*

**BOARD RESOLUTION: To Pass the Resolution honoring Michigan Civil Rights Icon Myrtle Gregg-LaFay.** There was no discussion.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 8-0

Clayton - Y	Roberson – Y
Elhasan – Y	Corriveau – Y
Combs - Y	Kosaraju - Y
Gasco-Bentley – Y	Lara - Y

**RESOLUTION UNANIMOUSLY PASSED.**

Mr. LaFay thanked the Commission for the tribute to his mother on behalf of the LaFay Family.

**PRESENTATION: ADA Stories Project**

Tobi Voigt, State of Michigan History Center, DNR

Ms. Voigt is the Director of Community Engagement for the State of Michigan History Center under the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Ms. Voigt provided background information on the State of Michigan History Center, indicating its function and resources available statewide; discussed their partnership with the conversation-based program StoryCorps (ended 2020), as well as a newly implemented conversation-based pilot program that pairs past and present state officials with leaders in Michigan’s Disability Community.

**PRESENTATION: Good Access is Good Business**

Lesley Keyton, State of Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

Ms. Keyton is a co-lead for the Economic Stability Administration Unit within the State’s Health and Human Services Department; provided background information on the function of the Unit, as well as discussing a labor-intensive project that oversees an entire department-wide scan for ADA. This project ensures that all state departments are in full compliance with the ADA with regards to policy and accessibility.

Christopher Samp, City of Detroit Department of Civil Rights, Inclusion and Opportunity

Mr. Samp is the Director of the Office of Disability Affairs for the City of Detroit’s Department of Civil Rights, Inclusion and Opportunity. Mr. Samp provided an

overview of the Office of Disability Affairs, newly implemented in 2021, and also discussed the recent launch of the City's first-ever strategic plan to significantly improve access and service to the Disability Community. The strategic plan is a three-year commitment to improving accessibility in Detroit with a focus on housing, employment, transportation, and digital access.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no Public Comment.

## DIVISION AND OTHER REPORTS

Interim Executive Director / Legislative Liaison Report, John E. Johnson, Jr.  
Interim Director Johnson submitted a full written report to the Commission on legislative activity from May 2021 to July 2021, as well as activity of the interim director since former executive director James White's departure.

Community Outreach, Anthony Lewis  
Mr. Lewis provided a full written report to the Commission and provided an update on Community Outreach efforts, including the expansion and activity of the Civil Rights Youth Academy, as well as a newly implemented social justice fellowship.

Attorney General Report, AAG David Cannon for Ron Robinson  
Mr. Cannon submitted a full written report to the Commission and provided a brief status update on the Rouch World matter.

## COMMISSION BUSINESS

Education Equity Committee Report

MEMBERS: Chair Clayton, Commissioner Kosaraju, Commissioner Lara

Commissioner Kosaraju provided remarks, recommendations, and next steps on behalf of the Education Equity Committee, and brought forth the following Resolution:

***“Michigan Civil Rights Commission Resolution In Support of the Detroit Literacy Lawsuit Settlement:***

***WHEREAS, in 2016, a group of students initiated a lawsuit against the Governor of the State of Michigan, the members of the State Board of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Director of the Department of Technology, Management and Budget; and the State School Reform/Redesign Officer; and***  
***WHEREAS, the student plaintiffs alleged they were denied services required for an opportunity to achieve a minimum level of education while attending Detroit schools; and***

***WHEREAS, on November 18, 2019, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission adopted a resolution declaring “public education to be a civil rights issue, and a minimally effective education to be a civil right”; and***

***WHEREAS, in support of the resolution the Commission stated that, “This Commission agrees with the Detroit School Children who brought the lawsuit. . . As a state and a nation, we recognize that EVERY student needs a basic education to prepare them for the possibility of being successful and productive members of***

*society. This unquestionably includes at its core the opportunity to attain literacy.”;*  
*and*

*WHEREAS, in its Education Equity in Michigan report, the Commission supported the Detroit students, noting that, “We also can take steps to help students in Detroit, who are the subject of a pending lawsuit, so they don’t have to use outdated textbooks, endure moldy smells, dead mice, leaky ceilings within the school buildings, or rely on an exorbitant number of substitute and uncertified teachers.”;*  
*and*

*WHEREAS, in a May 2020 settlement resolving the Detroit Public Schools case, the parties agreed that, as a matter of principle, all children deserve an opportunity to obtain a minimum basic education and, in particular, the Governor agreed that every child in the State of Michigan should have access to an educational environment in which “it is plausible to attain literacy”;*  
*and*

*WHEREAS, in the settlement, the Governor agreed to diligently propose and support legislation which, if enacted by the Michigan Legislature, would provide the Detroit Public School Community District (DPSCD) with at least \$94.4 Million of funding for literacy-related programs and initiatives; and*

*WHEREAS, Senate Bill 148, introduced by Senator Adam Hollier, and House Bill 4480, introduced by Representative Shri Thanedar, would each provide the agreed upon \$94.4 Million to DPSCD.*

*THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Michigan Civil Rights Commission reaffirms its support of Detroit Public Schools students, commends the parties for recognizing the need to allocate \$94.4 million to the needs of those students, and urges passage of SB 148 or HB 4480; and*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution is effective immediately upon its passage; and*

*BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution be forwarded to the Governor, House Speaker, House Minority Leader, House Education Committee, House School Aid and Department of Education Appropriations Subcommittee, Senate Majority Leader, Senate Minority Leader, Senate Education and Career Readiness Committee, and the Senate K-12 and Department of Education Appropriations Subcommittee.”*

**BOARD RESOLUTION: To Pass the Resolution supporting the Detroit Literacy Lawsuit Settlement.** There was no discussion.

**ROLL CALL VOTE: 8-0**

Clayton - Y	Roberson – Y
Elhasan – Y	Corriveau – Y
Combs - Y	Kosaraju - Y
Gasco-Bentley – Y	Lara - Y

**RESOLUTION UNANIMOUSLY PASSED.**

Commissioner Lara provided heartfelt remarks on the positive impact that Literacy and Education has had on her life since childhood.

Chair Clayton informed members of the audience that the MDCR is compiling a listing of literacy resources available across the state that will be posted on the Department’s website; local libraries and school districts also offer listings of literacy resources on their websites as well.

Administrative Rules Committee Report

MEMBERS: Chair Clayton, Vice-Chair Elhasan, Commissioner Roberson

Vice-Chair Elhasan provided remarks on the activity of the Administrative Rules Committee, and discussed the procedural requirements of submitting these revisions to the rules. The draft administrative rules were disseminated to the Commission, and will be brought forth for consideration by the Commission.

Dan Levy provided an overview of the changes that were made in the revised administrative rules and outlined next steps for their formal approval.

**MOTION: To Approve the updates to the Administrative Rules.**

**ROLL CALL VOTE: 8-0**

Clayton - Y	Roberson – Y
Elhasan – Y	Corriveau – Y
Combs - Y	Kosaraju - Y
Gasco-Bentley – Y	Lara - Y

**On Motion duly made and supported, the Commission Approved the updates to the Administrative Rules. *Motion carried unanimously.***

Chair Clayton credited former Commissioner Laura Reyes Kopack and former special advisor to the Commission Sylvia Elliott for their work on updating the Administrative Rules, and pushing towards completion prior to their departure from state government; and also thanked Dan Levy and Marcelina Treviño for their hard work as well. Dan Levy provided next steps.

Personnel Committee Report

MEMBERS: Chair Clayton, Vice-Chair Elhasan, Commissioner Lara

Chair Clayton provided an overview of the events that have led up to appointing a new permanent executive director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. A formal recommendation was made by the Personnel Committee to appoint interim director John E. Johnson, Jr. as permanent executive director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights.

Interim Director Johnson provided brief remarks and welcomed questions from the Commissioners.

**MOTION: Move to Appoint John E. Johnson, Jr. as permanent executive director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, effective immediately.**

**ROLL CALL VOTE: 8-0**

Clayton - Y	Roberson – Y
Elhasan – Y	Corriveau – Y
Combs - Y	Kosaraju - Y
Gasco-Bentley – Y	Lara - Y

**On Motion duly made (Combs) and supported (Lara), the Commission Approved the Appointment of John E. Johnson, Jr. as permanent executive director. Motion carried unanimously.**

Director Johnson thanked the Commission for their support and vote of confidence, the MDCR Staff for their professionalism and support, and thanked former executive director James White for his work in laying a strong foundation in advancing the work and the mission of the Department. Director Johnson will brief the Department on his reorganization plans through an all-agency meeting tomorrow morning.

#### NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

#### COMMISSIONER CLOSING COMMENTS

There were no Commissioner closing comments.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION: Move to Adjourn.** There was no discussion.

**On Motion duly made (Combs) and supported (Elhasan), the meeting of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission Adjourned at 6:57 P.M. Motion carried unanimously.**

*The next regular meeting of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission will convene on Monday, September 27, 2021 at a time, location and method to be determined.*

MINUTES APPROVED DURING SEPTEMBER 27, 2021 MEETING.