

**MINUTES OF THE
MARYLAND STEM CELL RESEARCH COMMISSION**
Monday, January 27, 2025
(Virtual Meeting)

Members:

Mary Armanios
Rachel Brewster, Chair
Margaret Conn Himelfarb
Mamta Gautam-Basak
Diane Hoffmann
Linda Powers
Avram Reisner
Ira Schwartz
Curt Van Tassell

Staff:

Ruchika Nijhara, MSCRF
Ben Antebi, MSCRF
Sabrina Spinner, MSCRF
Mindy Lehman, TEDCO

The Commission meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m.

I. Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the November 4, 2024 meeting. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Executive Director Report

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

A. 2024 Metrics and Milestones

An overview of MSCRF program metrics for calendar year 2024 was presented, covering, application volumes, grant awards, and disease indications. Detailed numerical data for each category was highlighted, emphasizing the increasing demand for MSCRF funding, and highlighted a few success stories from MSCRF funded companies.

B. Sage Policy Group Economic Impact Report 2024

The Sage Policy Group conducted an economic analysis of the MSCRF's impact since the last report completed in 2021. A summary of the findings was presented and is also featured in the [2024 MSCRF Annual report](#), reinforcing the Fund's economic benefits and value.

C. Update on R2 2025 Funding Cycle

The application submission deadline was January 13, 2025, with a total of 101 applications successfully submitted. This funding cycle reflects a diverse range of applicants from various Maryland academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and biotech companies across Maryland. Peer reviewers are currently being recruited, and the application review meeting is scheduled for March 2025.

D. Governor Moore's FY26 budget

Ms. Mindy Lehman gave a brief overview of the proposed FY'26 operating budget for TEDCO and the MSCRF program, outlining the State budget cycle and current priorities, a legislative processes, and shared the budget hearing schedules. The House and Senate budget hearings are scheduled for February 13-14, 2025. Letters of support and testimonials are always welcome and highly encouraged. Ms. Lehman and Dr. Nijhara will keep the Commission informed on new details regarding the MSCRF annual budget and any relevant bills before the Senate and House Subcommittees.

III. 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 §3-108(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: (i) the operation of two temporary Commission working groups; and (ii) review of operational considerations impacting the administration of the FY 2026 MSCRF budget.

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 3:17 p.m.

During the closed session the Commission: (i) discussed issues regarding the administration of the FY 2026 MSCRF budget; and (ii) upon motion duly made and seconded, approved the formation of two temporary working groups to study the possible development of new/revisions to existing funding programs, and administrative issues regarding the MSCRF going forward.

Meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.