

WEBVTT

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00:00:03.350 --> 00:00:10.000

Stephanie Suerth: Good morning, everybody. Thank you for joining. I apologize. I wasn't able to make the last meeting. I had a dental procedure.

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00:00:10.210 --> 00:00:14.860

Stephanie Suerth: so thank you. We'll start with roll call, Commissioner still with present.

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00:00:18.840 --> 00:00:20.830

Gina McKnight-Smith: Commissioner Mcknight-smith, present.

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00:00:24.480 --> 00:00:26.050

Noah Metheny: I can't.

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00:00:27.910 --> 00:00:29.330

Kimberly Prescott: Commissioner Prescott.

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00:00:30.320 --> 00:00:31.979

Janssen Evelyn: Mission to Evelyn. Present.

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00:00:33.470 --> 00:00:35.329

Eileen Levitt: Commissioner Levitt, Present.

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00:00:39.290 --> 00:00:41.760

Cleveland L. Horton II: Cleveland Horton, executive director, President.

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00:00:44.090 --> 00:00:46.780

Yolanda F. Sonnier: Yolanda, Sonya, deputy director.

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00:00:49.800 --> 00:00:52.200

Nicolette Young: Nicolette, young assistant director.

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00:00:52.930 --> 00:00:54.930

Glendora.Hughes: Glendora, Hughes, General Counsel.

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00:00:56.160 --> 00:00:59.109

Candice Crenshaw-MCCR: Candace Crenshaw, Director of Education and Outreach.

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00:00:59.940 --> 00:01:03.870

Spencer Dove: And Spencer DOE, special assistant to the executive director. Good morning.

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00:01:04.280 --> 00:01:05.319

Stephanie Suerth: Good morning.

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00:01:07.100 --> 00:01:13.280

Stephanie Suerth: I looked at the participants I didn't see, but I could have missed. Are there any members of the public with us today?

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00:01:14.140 --> 00:01:15.560

Spencer Dove: Not that I see.

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00:01:16.010 --> 00:01:17.830

Stephanie Suerth: Okay, great.

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00:01:18.810 --> 00:01:23.250

Stephanie Suerth: Then we will move on. I have a very brief report this morning.

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00:01:23.759 --> 00:01:25.509

Stephanie Suerth: I 1st wanted to start

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00:01:26.189 --> 00:01:30.259

Stephanie Suerth: by thanking the Mccl staff for a great event on July first.st

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00:01:30.460 --> 00:01:33.059

Stephanie Suerth: I don't know if everybody or anyone is able to attend

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00:01:33.210 --> 00:01:36.930

Stephanie Suerth: the, and I'm probably gonna say, Mara Laura

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00:01:37.640 --> 00:01:41.500

Stephanie Suerth: legislative wrap up was both informative and interesting.

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00:01:42.106 --> 00:01:46.389

Stephanie Suerth: As always, it was really interesting to hear about the progress that's being done.

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00:01:46.530 --> 00:01:49.409

Stephanie Suerth: Some of the things like the Expungent Reform Act

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00:01:50.140 --> 00:01:57.589

Stephanie Suerth: and Sb. 360, which includes AI generated images as revenge form, which, as we all know, is a type of

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00:01:57.870 --> 00:01:59.079

Stephanie Suerth: sexual harassment.

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00:01:59.650 --> 00:02:12.690

Stephanie Suerth: And then, just as a timing shout out, I appreciate the timing as the event was on July first, st and that is the day that all of that new legislation went into effect. So well done on that. That was fun

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00:02:14.170 --> 00:02:22.939

Stephanie Suerth: I also wanted to say. The event illustrated the ongoing need to keep pushing and advocating for legislation that supports Marylanders civil rights.

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00:02:23.530 --> 00:02:28.290

Stephanie Suerth: Speaking of events as always, I want to remind everybody. The gala is scheduled for August.

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00:02:28.920 --> 00:02:38.640

Stephanie Suerth: I also want to acknowledge the conversation from the last meeting. Sorry again. I was unable to attend and while there were concerns I do want to say that it is really great to know.

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00:02:39.272 --> 00:02:44.250

Stephanie Suerth: We are able to express our concerns and have conversations about issues that are important to us.

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00:02:44.730 --> 00:02:51.469

Stephanie Suerth: I think that demonstrates a level of trust within our group and our organization. And I think that's really important.

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00:02:52.230 --> 00:02:57.010

Stephanie Suerth: I also want to let everybody know about another event which I have sent to Mccr.

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00:02:57.120 --> 00:03:08.769

Stephanie Suerth: On September 18.th The Maryland Lynching Memorial Project is having a virtual film screening and panel discussion for the film. My father's name. I don't know if anybody knows about it, but it looks interesting.

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00:03:10.050 --> 00:03:11.609

Stephanie Suerth: And then finally,

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00:03:12.460 --> 00:03:16.119

Stephanie Suerth: I'd just like to ask everyone to take a moment, please for the hundreds of people

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00:03:16.330 --> 00:03:23.799

Stephanie Suerth: that have died in Texas, and for those that are still missing, following the flash floods and the

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00:03:24.790 --> 00:03:30.980

Stephanie Suerth: obvious concerns and and trauma that people are going through.

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00:03:49.400 --> 00:03:51.489

Stephanie Suerth: Thank you guys for indulging me in that one.

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00:03:52.130 --> 00:03:54.530

Stephanie Suerth: and that is the end of my report.

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00:03:55.290 --> 00:04:00.380

Stephanie Suerth: So if you would like to continue executive director.

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00:04:01.310 --> 00:04:19.359

Cleveland L. Horton II: Thank you, Madam Chair, I appreciate it, and I tell you great minds think alike because I had the same thing on my notes to acknowledge the horrific loss of life that have happened in Texas. So I do appreciate you taking the moment for that. I just want to add to that, though if we could take a moment, we lost Bill Clackey

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00:04:19.360 --> 00:04:36.619

Cleveland L. Horton II: recently, he was a staunch supporter of the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights. He literally had just called me to schedule another interview for us to do, to talk about our gala and everything we've been doing around fair housing, so unfortunately, I did not get an opportunity to

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00:04:36.670 --> 00:04:51.609

Cleveland L. Horton II: to speak to him before his passing, but I felt a perfect timing for us as a commission to go on the record to acknowledge his work, especially in the fair housing arena, and just take a moment for the passing of Bill Clackey.

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00:05:05.040 --> 00:05:26.399

Cleveland L. Horton II: Thank you all for indulging me. I will keep my my report, brief, as I do. Have a couple of things to talk about in executive session. So with that being said, I'll hold my comments and my time. I know we are tight on time today. So I want to make sure that we get through the rest of the agenda with the other reports, so I'll hold my time until executive session, and I'll yield to our deputy director.

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00:05:28.280 --> 00:05:30.254

Yolanda F. Sonnier: Thank you. Good morning. Everyone.

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00:05:31.980 --> 00:05:33.420

Janssen Evelyn: Good morning, ma'am.

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00:05:33.420 --> 00:05:50.990

Yolanda F. Sonnier: Thank you. Just my report will be very brief as well. The everyone has the updates to our case numbers with case processing with all of our units, our intake, our housing

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00:05:51.370 --> 00:06:03.599

Yolanda F. Sonnier: employment, and all our other areas that we investigate. I just wanted to share with the Commission that we have 2 new contractual individuals who will be starting on July the 16, th

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00:06:03.780 --> 00:06:07.000

Yolanda F. Sonnier: and once they start we will

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00:06:08.160 --> 00:06:26.410

Yolanda F. Sonnier: develop. Well, we'll engage them in a rigorous training. They will be going to our housing units, and we'll also provide some assistance to our Adr efforts. So that is all I have. Unless anyone has any questions for me.

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00:06:30.180 --> 00:06:37.040

Yolanda F. Sonnier: hearing none. Who am I passing the microphone? Is that you, Nicola? I'm passing the virtual microphone to.

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00:06:37.140 --> 00:06:38.130

Nicolette Young: Yes.

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00:06:38.130 --> 00:06:39.040

Yolanda F. Sonnier: Okay, perfect.

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00:06:39.040 --> 00:06:53.129

Nicolette Young: Thank you so much. Good morning, everyone. I hope that your week is off to a great start. I am happy to share that. Fy. 2026 is officially underway, and we have new money that we cannot spend so

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00:06:54.094 --> 00:06:58.110

Nicolette Young: but we are happy that we have completed this last fiscal year.

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00:06:58.190 --> 00:07:20.539

Nicolette Young: We do anticipate that we're going to close at least the general fund portion in the black. We did receive an effusion of some health insurance adjustments at year end. So we will be able to apply, though, and realign those funds to ensure that our health insurance is fully covered.

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00:07:20.540 --> 00:07:38.939

Nicolette Young: But we will also be able to revert some funding back. But that is going to. They've asked us to revert money back. So it's not as if we're just not spending it just not to spend it, because we could be using it for other things. But state agencies have been asked to revert

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00:07:39.190 --> 00:07:43.629

Nicolette Young: funds back. So we're going to try to, of course, comply with that.

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00:07:43.880 --> 00:08:02.580

Nicolette Young: On June 24, th the department of budget and management did notify all State agencies that they would be implementing a hiring freeze. Effective July first, st which, of course, you know. Of course, they just let us know one week in advance. So we, of course, jumped right into gear.

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00:08:02.580 --> 00:08:25.940

Nicolette Young: In addition to that hiring freeze, there is a section 38 reductions, and those were reductions that were included as part of the final adopted budget for 26. The total reduction is about 121 million statewide in the personnel operating budget. The impact to Mccr would be

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00:08:26.220 --> 00:08:44.250

Nicolette Young: \$261,000, which would include 237,000 on the General Fund side, and 23,000 no. \$24,000 on the Federal side, and that reduction impact would equate to about keeping 3

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00:08:44.340 --> 00:08:59.720

Nicolette Young: positions vacant throughout the year in order to comply with that. So we're going to work with Dbm. To see if we can identify ways where we can still bring on staff, but also comply with with that operating reduction.

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00:09:00.098 --> 00:09:16.359

Nicolette Young: In addition to that, with the hiring freeze, we are going to submit a blanket exception. Request for our Civil Rights Officer Series, as well as the Assistant general counsel of general counsels that were included as new positions for Fy. 26.

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00:09:16.360 --> 00:09:37.599

Nicolette Young: So we hope to get that blanket exception approved by the Department of budget and management. Also, we are looking at bringing on 2 new administrative specialists for my unit, and we are currently doing interviews and anticipate bringing those staffed on staff on next month. Additionally with the

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00:09:37.600 --> 00:09:48.369

Nicolette Young: hiring freeze, they're going to also be doing further reductions associated with what they refer to as the voluntary separation program.

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00:09:48.550 --> 00:09:56.269

Nicolette Young: It's something that they tried to implement back in 2011 as well as 2015. And essentially, if

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00:09:56.390 --> 00:10:19.989

Nicolette Young: state employees apply for the program and their proposal is accepted, the agency would. There's like a severance pay, but you also lose, lose a position. We can't afford to lose any positions within the agency, so we will not be participating in that program. But that doesn't mean that, you know. We wouldn't have staff members that may or may not

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00:10:20.060 --> 00:10:31.039

Nicolette Young: try to apply for it. If they do apply for it, the agency stance would be to reject the request, and

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00:10:31.980 --> 00:10:47.030

Nicolette Young: Yolanda mentioned about the civil rights officers that are starting on July 6.th We're selling gala tickets. You have the list of the advocate sponsors, and that's it for my presentation presentation. If I have any questions I can answer now.

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00:10:50.750 --> 00:11:06.110

Cleveland L. Horton II: Before you pass the mic on to the next person, Nicolette. I don't see any questions right now. I just wanted to acknowledge the great work that Nicoletta has done to keep us afloat. You know thou giveth, and thou taketh away right

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00:11:06.110 --> 00:11:07.380

Cleveland L. Horton II: kind of what they did.

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00:11:07.380 --> 00:11:33.940

Cleveland L. Horton II: this hiring freeze for us right. So we got these 15 pins. And then there was this hiring freeze announcement that came out. So Nicolette has been feverishly kind of scheduling meetings and working with department of budgeting management to ensure that the impact to our agency is minimal. So normally, by the time I can get to our office to ask her, what's the status of what's going on with this email? She's already filed up and got a response for it. So.

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00:11:33.940 --> 00:11:53.149

Cleveland L. Horton II: and she's doing that with nobody else in her unit. Right? So right now, Nicolette is a 1 woman show, and she is still continuing to juggle everything that she needs to, and continue to make sure. Fiscally we are in a better position. So I do just want to highlight the great work that Nicolette has done being understaffed.

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00:11:53.150 --> 00:12:18.529

Cleveland L. Horton II: working through it all, going through the interviews, following up with department of budget and management, making sure that we get these exceptions, making sure that we finish the year in the black, making sure that we stay in the black, making sure that the money that we're receiving for our gala is deposited keeping track of all of our expenses for that. So again, I just wanted to lift up Nicola and say, Thank you for everything that you've done and continue to do, and continue to show up for us.

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00:12:19.020 --> 00:12:32.539

Nicolette Young: Thank you very much, Cleveland. I really do appreciate it, and it's easy to do that when I see that when the rest of my team shows up and does, you know, do what they need to do as well. So I just gotta. I gotta do my part. But thank you for your kind words. I appreciate it.

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00:12:33.080 --> 00:12:38.790

Stephanie Suerth: And I'll echo that. Thank you. But I'm going. I was just about to say, I see Nagelina has her hand up so.

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00:12:40.450 --> 00:12:49.909

Magdalena Navarro: I have a question, and this is with respect to the freeze. How do you see? This will affect? And this also goes to Cleveland, your office.

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00:12:50.170 --> 00:12:55.210

Magdalena Navarro: what things might need to be cut or reduced, and so on. And how can

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00:12:55.330 --> 00:12:59.820

Magdalena Navarro: can we assist in a way of being communicators.

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00:13:01.470 --> 00:13:08.640

Cleveland L. Horton II: Well, I would say, I think you know, listening to Nicolette's report initially, the

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00:13:08.680 --> 00:13:28.370

Cleveland L. Horton II: proposal is for us to potentially keep 3 positions vacant throughout the year. Now, what that means for us obviously, is that we need every single PIN that we have, including the additional pins, in order for us to get rid of the backlog in order for us to be able to respond to complaints of discrimination in a more timely fashion.

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00:13:28.370 --> 00:13:47.440

Cleveland L. Horton II: As the Federal Government continues to roll back their civil rights protections, the need for our agency will continue to grow more and more. We're already seeing that, especially from the eeoc side, how the expectation is growing every day in terms of what our expectations and what we can complete, and on behalf of our employment, discrimination, complaint.

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00:13:47.440 --> 00:14:04.160

Cleveland L. Horton II: The impact for us truly is us being able to respond in a timely fashion which has always been, and us having the resources to be able to do that as we bring on more staff. It's important for us also to be able to match that with our legal personnel. Right? Because more staff, more Pcs more legal opinions.

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00:14:04.160 --> 00:14:20.170

Cleveland L. Horton II: In order for us to be able to respond to that in a timely fashion, we need to ensure that we're at least increasing in some capacity in that area as well. So having to keep one of those legal positions open as well is going to impact that. So when we take a look at potentially trying to keep

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00:14:20.170 --> 00:14:37.180

Cleveland L. Horton II: 3 positions open across the board, while for some bigger agencies it's no big deal, but for us, being a smaller agency, especially in this climate, in this environment, that we're in right now, it would be critical for us to continue to move forward, to be able to fill those 3 positions. So we are engaging in.

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00:14:37.180 --> 00:15:04.889

Cleveland L. Horton II: you know, creative ways, as Nicolette so eloquently said, to try to figure out how we can still fill those 3 positions and try to honor this reduction. So we're looking at any and every way that we can to reduce costs, whether it's our mailing costs, doing things more electronically, just really trying to figure out as an agency. Where can we reduce as much cost as possible to absorb some of that reduction, so that we can still continue to move on and fill those positions.

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00:15:11.490 --> 00:15:15.199

Magdalena Navarro: Thanks for mentioning that. And

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00:15:15.490 --> 00:15:36.690

Magdalena Navarro: I have. You know, you know, that I work for the Federal Government, and it is the same situation with the hiring freeze, and losing of people, either by retirement, early retirement, or by rifs reduction in force, or viras or vseps anyways as possible to

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00:15:36.690 --> 00:15:55.059

Magdalena Navarro: to lower numbers in the Federal workforce. It is a challenge. It is a challenge to continue with the same mission. So you know, I have a motive which is, we have to be creative, creative. In doing the work coming forward, we have to be also strong and resilience

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00:15:55.120 --> 00:16:06.349

Magdalena Navarro: with that, you know, in in union we have more force. So whatever we can do don't hesitate, you know, to to share more for us to communicate.

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00:16:06.900 --> 00:16:08.020

Cleveland L. Horton II: We appreciate that.

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00:16:09.810 --> 00:16:14.081

Cleveland L. Horton II: And be careful what you ask for, but we appreciate that.

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00:16:14.980 --> 00:16:15.950

Magdalena Navarro: Don't worry.

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00:16:19.790 --> 00:16:26.240

Nicolette Young: Okay. So, hearing none, so I will pass the mic to the next person. Thank you.

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00:16:26.810 --> 00:16:35.320

Glendora.Hughes: All right. I guess I'm the next person. Good morning, everyone. My report is very brief.

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00:16:35.500 --> 00:16:46.729

Glendora.Hughes: I will hold mines for the executive session, just to give you updates on some of the litigation, but everything else is in my written report. Unless you have questions on that.

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00:16:47.390 --> 00:16:54.659

Glendora.Hughes: I will yield my time to the next person, which would be Candace.

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00:16:55.280 --> 00:17:12.250

Candice Crenshaw-MCCR: Good morning, everyone so great to see you all today. I just have a few brief highlights, as you know our gala is, we are 47 days away. So we just encourage everyone to continuously support through purchasing tickets and sharing with your network.

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00:17:12.250 --> 00:17:36.229

Candice Crenshaw-MCCR: Also, we education and outreach. We've been hosting virtual open houses. I did send that out in an email. So I just ask that everyone shares that with their network, so that we can continue to collaborate with other organizations and individuals, so that we can become interdependent on one another and share what we have going on as well as gain information about what's going on in everyone's communities.

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00:17:36.330 --> 00:17:50.739

Candice Crenshaw-MCCR: With that being stated. As you know, we also have our programs, civil rights leadership program, young scholars program and our Maryland leadership and advocacy program that we are launching 2026 this fiscal year.

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00:17:50.740 --> 00:18:15.679

Candice Crenshaw-MCCR: So we just encourage everyone to participate. I will ensure that we send out an email with the QR code and links so that everyone can share with their network so that we can collaborate. We want to collaborate with individuals to gain speakers, participants to help host some of our sessions. So greater detail will be coming out. I just wanted to share that. So that that's on everyone's radar so that we can continuously collaborate

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00:18:15.680 --> 00:18:23.669

Candice Crenshaw-MCCR: with our programs that we have coming up in E and O, with that being stated, that will conclude my report for today. Does anyone have any questions at all?

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00:18:25.390 --> 00:18:26.490

Candice Crenshaw-MCCR: Thank you.

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00:18:29.520 --> 00:18:32.679

Cleveland L. Horton II: Madam Chair, that is all of these staff reports.

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00:18:33.860 --> 00:18:37.630

Stephanie Suerth: Wow! That was incredibly quick. Thank you, guys. So much for that.

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00:18:40.140 --> 00:18:46.280

Stephanie Suerth: Sorry my system is really really slow, so the next thing would be any new business. I think we

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00:18:48.280 --> 00:18:51.470

Stephanie Suerth: gone through everything in the reports.

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00:18:51.630 --> 00:18:54.449

Stephanie Suerth: Does anyone have anything to add to new business at this time?

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00:18:55.770 --> 00:19:02.310

Janssen Evelyn: I know we have to go into executive session, so if there's no new business, I would make a motion to move into executive session.

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00:19:05.080 --> 00:19:05.970

Stephanie Suerth: So move.

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00:19:06.130 --> 00:19:07.900

Noah Metheny: Is there a second second.

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00:19:08.500 --> 00:19:09.509

Stephanie Suerth: All in favor.

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00:19:09.510 --> 00:19:10.320

Janssen Evelyn: I.

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00:19:11.810 --> 00:19:12.790

Stephanie Suerth: Any opposed.

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00:19:14.620 --> 00:19:18.859

Stephanie Suerth: Okay, let's move to executive session. Everyone. Thank you very much.

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00:19:18.860 --> 00:19:26.250

Spencer Dove: Alright. I'm gonna cancel the recording right now, and the interpreter should be good to go.