

Maryland Workers' Compensation Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 9, 2024

Call to Order: Chairwoman Maureen Quinn called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m.

Present: Chairwoman Quinn and Commissioners Kathleen Evans, James R. Forrester, Asha J Jefferson, Allan Kittleman, Morrisann Martin, Howard Metz, Ju Y Oh, Delia T Schadt, and Tracey Parker-Warren.

Staff Members Present: Theresa A. Cornish, Chief Executive Officer, Scott Curtis, Assistant Attorney General, Dr. Jerome Reichmister, Medical Director, Amy Lackington, Administrator, and Elizabeth Fletcher, Secretary of the Commission.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the Commission meeting on January 9, 2025, were reviewed by the Commissioners. Upon motion of Commissioner Forrester and seconded by Commissioner Martin, the minutes were approved with a unanimous vote.

Chair Report: Chair Quinn reviewed the 2024 Annual Report and expressed gratitude to David Jones for his work, especially highlighting the Key Bridge photo on the cover. She also acknowledged the collective effort of those involved in analyzing data from CompHub for the report. Chair Quinn shared that Senator Antonio Hayes will be the new Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee and Senator Michael A. Jackson will be the Chair of our Budget Sub-Committee. She advised that she would be meeting with them soon. She announced that the MWCEA Alfred M. Porth Award will be presented to Frank L. Lipshultz at the January 23, 2024 Commissioners' meeting at 11:30 a.m. She encouraged the Commissioners to attend. Angela Koslowski will also attend the Commissioners' meeting to discuss the MWCEA 2025 Annual Conference program. Chair Quinn informed the Commissioners that she and Scott Curtis will meet with stakeholders tomorrow to discuss rewriting MD Ann. Code, L&E § 9-709, with a focus on medical authorization and expanding access to prior claims. The Commissioners discussed how to handle the rescheduling of cases that were postponed due to inclement weather and the process for doing so efficiently. Amy Lackington provided details about a new parking management software system and asked the Commissioners to forward any relevant parking emails to her for further action.

Old Business: The Commissioners engaged in a comprehensive discussion regarding key aspects of the case scheduling and backfilling processes for dockets. Theresa Cornish provided an overview of the current backfilling process, noting that it is a completely manual process that takes several factors into consideration when rescheduling a case. She advised that efforts were underway to review and enhance this process to make it more efficient and streamlined. Commissioner Martin inquired about the development of an e-notice tab in CompHub to facilitate improved communication and to streamline the receipt and tracking of hearing notifications for practitioners. Chair Quinn confirmed that this feature is already included in the pending list of CompHub enhancements. The EM team met with attorney David Schoenfeld to discuss the scheduling of cases for solo practitioners, noting instances where multiple hearings for the same practitioner are being set for the same day but at different locations. Chair Quinn assured

the Commissioners that a solution to address this issue is being developed and will be implemented promptly.

New Business: There was no new business.

Medical Report: Dr. Jerome Reichmister addressed several important medical issues on healthcare, the use of certain medications, and emerging surgical advancements. He discussed a nationwide decrease in overdose deaths, which is a positive public health trend. Patients who visit the emergency room due to hallucinogenic drug use have a 3.5 times increased risk of developing schizophrenia. He also discussed the differences between DO (Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine) and MD (Medical Doctors). He advised that early studies suggest that weight loss drugs may help with alcohol abuse. He provided information on an exciting surgical development involving a bioengineered human artery. This artery, cultured from human vascular cells, can be used in reconstruction surgeries, offering an alternative to using the patient's own artery in certain situations. He noted concerns about the increased use of gabapentin in workers' compensation cases, particularly because the drug can cause serious side effects. A ten-year study concluded that workers in the utility sector have the highest rate of hearing loss compared to other industries. Alarming, 38% of workers exposed to noise in the utility sector do not use hearing protection. He stressed the importance of education around hearing protection, especially for those working in high-risk environments like turbine-generating factories.

Adjournment: Upon a motion by Commissioner Forrester and seconded by Commissioner Kittleman, and upon a unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.