County Council of Howard County, Maryland

2026 Legislative Session

Legislative day # 12

RESOLUTION NO. 174 - 2026

Introduced by: Chairperson at the request of the County Executive

Short Title: Appointment– Saraniya Tharmarajah, PhD - Adult-Use Cannabis Advisory Panel

Title: A RESOLUTION confirming the appointment of Saraniya Tharmarajah, PhD, to the Adult-Use Cannabis Advisory Panel.

Introduced and read first time on Oct 5, 2026.

By order Michelle Harrod
Michelle Harrod, Administrator to the County Council

Read for a second time and a public hearing held on Oct 19, 2026.

By order Michelle Harrod
Michelle Harrod, Administrator to the County Council

This Resolution was read the third time and was Adopted ✓, Adopted with amendments ___, Failed ___, Withdrawn ___ by the County Council on Oct 30, 2026.

Certified by Michelle Harrod
Michelle Harrod, Administrator to the County Council

NOTE: [[text in brackets]] indicates deletions from existing language; TEXT IN SMALL CAPITALS indicates additions to existing language. ~~Strike-out~~ indicates material deleted by amendment; Underlining indicates material added by amendment.

WHEREAS, Section 404 of the Howard County Charter and Section 6.300 of the Howard County Code provide for the County Executive to appoint and for the County Council to confirm nominees to Howard County Boards and Commissions created by law; and

WHEREAS, Sections 6.350 and Subtitle 24 of Title 12 of the Howard County Code provide for an Adult-Use Cannabis Advisory Panel in Howard County; and

WHEREAS, the County Executive has proposed the appointment of Saraniya Tharmarajah, PhD, as a member of the Adult-Use Cannabis Advisory Panel; and

WHEREAS, the County Council ratifies the County Executive's special trust and confidence in the abilities of the nominee.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the County Council of Howard County, Maryland this 30 day of October, 2026 that the following person is appointed as a member of the Adult-Use Cannabis Advisory Panel to serve from the passage of this Resolution to October 30, 2029 or until a successor is appointed and confirmed:

Saraniya Tharmarajah, PhD
Clarksville, Maryland

SARANIYA THARMARAJAH

[redacted]

EDUCATION:

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
PhD in Social and Behavioral Sciences, Department of Health, Behavior and Society 2025
Advisor: Rajiv Rimal, PhD; Doug Storey, PhD
Dissertation: *Research-Engaged Arts for Climate and Health (REACH) Framework: a Science and Arts Partnership to Expand the Scope of Communication*

University of Oxford, Oriel College 2019
MSc in Evidence-Based Social Intervention and Policy Evaluation, Department of Social Policy
Advisor: Aaron Reeves, PhD
Thesis: *Generational Decline of Immigrant Health in the US: A Systematic Review of the Immigrant Health Paradox*

Johns Hopkins University
BA in Public Health Studies
BA in Sociology
Minor in Theater Arts and Studies 2017
Thesis supervisors: Emily Agree, PhD; Meredith Greif, PhD

HONORS, AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS:

2025 International Communication Association Top Student Paper Session
2025 Distinguished Doctoral Research Award, Department of Health Behavior and Society
2024 Distinguished Doctoral Research Award, Department of Health Behavior and Society
2024 Eugene O'Neill Center National Playwrights Conference, Semi-Finalist
2023 Gordis Teaching Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University
2019 Oxford New Writing Festival, Winner
2018 Fulbright-Nehru Scholarship
2017 The President's Commendation for Service in the Arts, Johns Hopkins University
2017 Homewood Arts Certificate, Johns Hopkins University
2013 Woodrow Wilson Research Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University

GRANTS

2024 **National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) P30 Core Center, Community Health Addressing Regional Maryland Environmental Determinants of Disease**

- Awarded pilot intervention grant on developing a film installation to promote climate activism in partnership with environmental justice organizations at The Peale Museum
- Role: Principal Investigator
- *Communicating Climate Activism Behaviors through Entertainment-Education in Maryland*
- Total funds: $40,000
  **Grant rescinded due to reorganization of NIH in 2025*

2023 **Gordis Teaching Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University**

- Support for up to 10 fellows per year to teach small, seminar-style courses in the Undergraduate Program in Public Health
- *Communicating Climate Change: Creative Approaches for Action*
- Role: Instructor
- Total funds: $8,000

2024 **Campus as a Living Lab Grant, JHU Office of Sustainability**

- Awarded to proposals that advance sustainability practices, research, and teaching that support priorities outlined in the university's Climate Action and Sustainability qualitative studies of health and medicine
- *Engaging students in Climate Action on Campus through Arts-based Communication*
- Role: Instructor and Principal Investigator
- Total Funds: $5,000

2021 **Maryland State Arts Council Creativity Grant**

- Grant opportunity to serve the growing needs of relevant arts projects and collaborations within Maryland communities
- Evaluation of the process and impact of communicating public health findings through the research-based theatre performance COVID Monologues
- Role: Principal Investigator
- Total Funds: $3,400

2020 **US Department of State Citizen Diplomacy Action Fund Rapid Response**

- Public service grant to promote community resiliency during COVID-19
- COVID-19 Research-Based Theatre to facilitate a virtual production of research-based monologue festival on peer-reviewed COVID-19 public health research in partnership with Baltimore-based theatre artists
- Role: Co-Creator, Project Lead, Producer, and Actor
- Total Funds: $10,000

2017 **Homewood Arts Certificate, Johns Hopkins University**

- Grant awarded to graduating seniors who have made an ongoing and committed contribution to the co-curricular arts at Johns Hopkins to complete a signficant original final project in the arts
- *Confessions of a Coconut: a one woman show on immigration and identity*
- Role: Playwright and performer
- Total Funds: $500

2015 **Global Health Established Field Placement Grant, Center for Global Health**

- Grant awarded on global health project to conduct fieldwork on site
- *C-TRIUMPH study on household transmission of Tuberculosis and HIV in Chennai, India*
- Role: Research Assistant
- Total funds: $3,500

2013 **Woodrow Wilson Research Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University**

- Fellowship awarded to ten undergraduates to conduct independent research
- *Effects of forced Migration on Second-Generation Assimilation: Operationalization of a Hybrid Identity through a Global Cultural market:*
- Role: Student PI and Lead Qualitative researcher
- Total funds: $10,000

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE:

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Research and Narrative Lead, PI: Dr. Rajiv Rimal July 2025-present
Storytelling for Climate Change: Using Transportive Narratives to Overcome Climate Change Skepticism & Reduce Opinion Polarization
Discovery Grant, Johns Hopkins University

Doctoral Research Assistant, PI: Dr. Meghan Moran Oct 2024-present
Effects and Equity Impacts of Cannabis Policy on Tobacco and Cannabis Co-Use in Young Adults
National Institutes of Health and Food and Drug Administration

Doctoral Research Assistant, PI: Dr. Meghan Moran Oct 2024- present
From Perceptions to Behaviors: A Comprehensive Approach to Examine the Impact of Public Health Communication Messaging about the Continuum of Risk for Tobacco Products
National Institutes of Health

Principal Investigator, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering Aug 2024-present
National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) P30 Core Center, Community Health Addressing Regional Maryland Environmental Determinants of Disease

Doctoral Research Assistant (Qualitative lead), PI: Dr. Rajiv Rimal Aug 2022- present
Evaluation of Gender Resource Centers in Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, India
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Doctoral Research Assistant, PI: Dr. Carl Latkin Jun 2022- present
Identifying Facilitators and Barriers of Climate Activism Behaviors
Bloomberg American Health Initiative

Doctoral Research Assistant, International Vaccine Access Center Jun 2022- present
Combating Online Health Misinformation and Vaccine Hesitancy
Sabin Vaccine Fund

Doctoral Research Assistant, Center for Communication Programs Aug 2021- 2022
Non-communicable diseases and mental health in Tamil Nadu, India: An exploratory study
World Bank

Doctoral Research Assistant, Center for Communication Programs Aug 2021- 2022
USAID

Doctoral Research Assistant, Center for Communication Programs Aug 2021- 2022
Multisectoral Child Nutrition and Family Planning project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, USAID

Research Assistant, Department of Health, Policy and Management Aug 2020- 2021
Evidence-Based Practice Center
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)

Research Assistant, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing Aug 2020-2021
Safety planning with survivors of intimate partner violence from marginalized groups

Research Assistant, Department of Health, Policy and Management
Center for Population Health IT Aug 2014- 2015

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

Goucher College
Adjunct Lecturer Fall 2025
Undergraduate course, *Intro to Writing: Science Communication*
Department of Professional & Creative Writing
Center for Writing, Arts and Media

Johns Hopkins University
Faculty Instructor Fall 2024
Undergraduate course, *Communicating Climate Change: Creative Approaches for Action*
Department of Public Health Studies
Department of Theater Arts and Studies

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
Graduate Teaching Assistant, Fundamentals of Health Behavior and Society Fall 2024
Graduate course taught by Rajiv Rimal, PhD

Guest lecturer & Graduate Teaching Assistant, Sociological Perspectives on Health Fall 2024
Graduate course taught by Katherine Clegg Smith, PhD

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Designing Social and Behavioral Communication Change Programs Fall 2023
Graduate course taught by Tilly Gorman, PhD and Uttara Bharath Kumar, MPH

Guest lecturer & Graduate Teaching Assistant, Introduction to Persuasive Communications Fall 2023
Graduate course taught by Meghan Brigid Moran, PhD

Guest lecturer & Graduate Teaching Assistant, Entertainment-Education for Behavior Change May 2022
Graduate course taught by Caroline Jacoby, MPH

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Contemporary Issues in Health Communication January 2022- March 2022
Graduate course taught by Meghan Brigid Moran, PhD

Fulbright English Teacher Kanchipuram, India
Infant Jesus Higher Secondary Matriculation School June 2017- March 2018

MENTORING EXPERIENCE:

Tanisha Luthria, JHU Public Undergraduate Health Honors Thesis *Aug 2023 to May 2024*

Exploration of Gender Norms in villages in Madhya Pradesh, India in the context of Gender Resource Centers

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS:

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS:

1. Moran, M. Tharmarajah, S., Czaplicki, L., Thrul, J, Spindle, T., (R&R). A narrative review of research on cannabis advertising in the United States. *Current Addiction Reports.*
2. Jamison, A, Ganjoo, R., Tharmarajah, S. Ganjoo, R., Rimal, R. N., , Parida, M., (2025). More Work For ASHA? A Qualitative Exploration of the Role of WhatsApp Messaging and Community Health Work in the Urban Slum Areas of Varanasi, India. *PLOS Global Public Health.*

3. Kuch, L., Tharmarajah, S., Ganjoo, R., Parida, M., Luthria, T., Stephens, D., Rimal, R. & Lapinski, M. K. (2025). Gender Norms and Outcome Expectations in Reporting of Gender-Based Violence: Evidence from Madhya Pradesh, India. *VeriXiv*, 2(159), 159.

4. Dayton, L., Parker, K., Ross, J., Tharmarajah, S., & Latkin, C. (2024). "Taking Action in Community Is Much, Much Preferable to Doing It Alone": An Examination of Multi-Level Facilitators of and Barriers to Sustained Collective Climate Change Activism Among US Residents. *Climate*, *12*(12), 222.

5. Rimal, R. N., Ganjoo, R., Jamison, A., Parida, M., & Tharmarajah, S. (2024). Social norms, vaccine confidence, and interpersonal communication as predictors of vaccination intentions: Findings from slum areas in Varanasi, India. *Vaccine*.

6. Tharmarajah, S., Ganjoo, R., Lapinski, M. K., Kuch, L., Luthria, T., Bhaktaram, A., ... & Rimal, R. (2024). Uncovering the role of social norms, the diffusion and adoption of Gender Resource Centers in India: a research protocol. *Gates Open Access* (Accepted)

7. Hurley, E. A., Tharmarajah, S., de Mahy, G., Rassp, J., Salvatore, J., Jones, J. P., & Harvey, S. (2023). Audience Response to COVID Monologues: Research-Based Theater on the Societal Impact of COVID-19. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 08901171231216204.

8. Newman-Toker, D. E., Peterson, S. M., Badihian, S., Hassoon, A., Nassery, N., Parizadeh, Tharmarajah, S. & Robinson, K. A. (2022). Diagnostic Errors in the Emergency Department: A Systematic Review.

9. Sabri, B., Tharmarajah, S., Njie-Carr, V. P., Messing, J. T., Loerzel, E., Arscott, J., & Campbell, J. C. (2022). Safety planning with marginalized survivors of intimate partner violence: Challenges of conducting safety planning intervention research with marginalized women. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *23*(5), 1728-1751.

10. Wilson, L. M., Tharmarajah, S., Jia, Y., Semba, R. D., Schaumberg, D. A., & Robinson, K. A (2021). The Effect of Lutein/Zeaxanthin Intake on Human Macular Pigment Optical Density: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Advances in nutrition (Bethesda, Md.)*, nmab071.Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1093/advances/nmab071

PEER-REVIEWED MANUSCRIPTS IN PREPARATION:

1. Tharmarajah, S., Rimal, R. Effective health communication through an arts-science partnership: Introducing the Research-Engaged Arts for Climate and Health (REACH) framework.
2. Tharmarajah, S., Dayton, L., Latkin, C., Segmenting Audiences for a Climate Communication Campaign: Implications from a Latent Class Analysis of Climate Activism Behaviors in the US
3. Tharmarajah, S. and Hurley, E.. Ethical Challenges in Translating through Research-Based Theatre
4. Tharmarajah, S., Harvey, S., Hurley, E. Beyond the page and onto the stage: Understanding the process and value of a research-based theater project on COVID-19 in the US
5. Tharmarajah, S., Kuch, R., Ganjoo, R., Lapinksi-Knight, M., Rimal, R.N. Barriers and facilitators of leadership of women in Gender Resource Centers in Odisha, India

6. Tharmarajah, S., Dayton, L., Ross, J., Parker, K., Latkin, C. Exploring effective messaging to initiate climate activism to support environmental policy in the US

REVIEWED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:

1. Tharmarajah, S., Kuch, L., Lapinski, M., Swain, M., Stephens, D, Luthria, T, Bhaktaram, A Ganjoo, R., & Rimal, R.. *In International Communication Association 2025.* ICA.

2. Tharmarajah, S., Hurley, E. Beyond the page and onto the stage: Understanding the process and value of a research-based theater project on COVID-19 in the US. In *UCL Centre for Behaviour Change Behaviour Change Conference 2025on Health & Sustainability,* UCL.

3. Tharmarajah, S., Dayton, L., Ross, J., Parker, K., Latkin, C. Exploring effective messaging to initiate climate activism to support environmental policy in the US. In *APHA 2024 A Meeting and Expo.* APHA.

4. Tharmarajah, S., Kuch, L., Raj, P., Swain, M., Ganjoo, R., Rimal, R., & Lapinski, M. (2024, October). Exploring a structured approach to gender-based violence resolution through gender resource centers in madhya pradesh, India. In *APHA 2024 Annual Meeting a* APHA.

5. Jamison, A., Tharmarajah, S., Ganjoo, R., Panda, B. K., Mohanty, S., Parida, M., & Rimal, R. (2024, October). Building trust for "happier babies": A qualitative evaluation of the 'happy baby programme" to promote childhood vaccination through whastapp in Varanasi, India. *hAPHA 2024 Annual Meeting and Expo. APHA.*

6. Rimal, R., Ganjoo, R., Pandey, M., Rath, S., Parida, M., Prasad, K., ... & Tallam, M. (2024, October). Let's talk this through: Community conversations as mediators of intervention effects in promoting vaccination. In APHA *2024 Annual Meeting and Expo. APHA.*
7. Ross, J., Tharmarajah, S., Parker, K., Dayton, L., Latkin C. Identifying barriers and facilitators of climate activism in the US. *Sustainability Leadership Symposium.*

8. Hurley, E, Tharmarajah, S. deMahy, G. Rassp, J. "COVID monologues": Research-based theater to disseminate studies on the impact of COVID-19 on US society. *(Oral Presentation)* In *APHA 2021 Annual Meeting and Expo. APHA*

INVITED GUEST LECTURES AND SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

AS.280.314. Truth, Evidence, and Influence: Case Studies in Public Health May 2025
Lecture to JHU undergraduate students: Climate Misinformation

PH 224.692. Methods in Formative Research and Human-Centered Design for Intervention Development, Johns Hopkins May 2025
Lecture to JHU graduate students: Using research-based theater to disseminate public health findings

Activating Friends and Family Through Narratives January 2025
Workshop for Citizen's Climate Lobby designed with Dr. Julia Fine

Mobilizing a Public Health Campaign, American Public Health Association October 2024

Invited guest panel speaker on using entertainment-education for climate communication

Social Impact for Entertainment Conference December 2023
Invited panel moderator: Transformative Hits: Popular Shows for Impact

AS 280.454 Beyond the Peer Review: Data Dissemination, Johns Hopkins May 2024
Lecture to undergraduate students: Using research-based theater to disseminate public health findings

PH 224.692. Methods in Formative Research and Human-Centered Design for Intervention Development, Johns Hopkins May 2023
Lecture to graduate students: Using research-based theater to disseminate public health findings

Conversations on Social Justice and Equity, Johns Hopkins University May 2022
Invited screening and discussion of COVID Monologues

University of Toronto, *Representing Science on Stage* September 2021
Lecture to undergraduate students on COVID Monologues as a case study

National Institutes of Health NIAAA Race and Medicine Interest Group May 2021
Invited screening and discussion of COVID Monologues

Alberta Museum Conferences March 2021
Invited Speaker: Seeking beyond Our Silos: What Museums Can Learn From Theatre in the Time of COVID

ACADEMIC SERVICE:

INITIATIVES:

Practice Committee **Baltimore, MD**
Representative for the Department of Health, Behavior and Society August 2021- 2024
- Served as the PhD representative for practice-related activities for the Department

Doctoral Student Council **Baltimore, MD**
Representative for the Department of Health, Behavior and Society August 2023- June 2024
- Served as one of two department representatives of an organization tasked with liaising between doctoral students across the Bloomberg School of Public Health and School administrators

Doctoral Enhancement Committee, HBS Department **Baltimore, MD**
PhD Representative August 2022- 2023
- Served as one of two student representatives on an ad hoc committee to improve the experience of doctoral students in the Department of Health, Behavior and Society

Health, Behavior and Society Student Organization **Baltimore, MD**
PhD Co-Chair August 2022- August 2023
- Served as the primary liaison between doctoral students in the Department of Health, Behavior and Society and department leadership
- Organized and coordinated student representation on departmental committees

SELECTED THEATER/FILM PERFORMANCES:
THEATER

The Lake Effect	Priya	1st Stage, dir. Alex Levy
As You Like It	Le Beau	Chesapeake Shakespeare Company, dir. Ian Gallanar
Is Edward Snowden Single?	April	Single Carrot Theatre, dir. Alix Fenhagen
COVID Monologues	Alana	Single Carrot Theatre, dir. Genevieve de Mahy
How to Make Friends and Then Kill Them	Dorrie	Michael Pilch Studio, dir Charlie Rogers
Samsara	Suraiya	Single Carrot Theatre, dir. Lauren Saunders

FELLOWSHIPS

Docs In Progress	2025 Story Development Fellowship
Theater Washington	2024 Mentorship Program

DIRECTING

FIRED UP!	Independent Documentary
Bonbibi and Dakshin Ray	Vital Matters, Creative Alliance
Bandera	Arellano Theatre
Conversations with the Carrols	Homewood Museum

PLAYWRITING & CO-CREATING

CHARMED Climate Conversations, Playwright and Director, Peale Museum 2025
COVID Monologues, Co-Creator, Single Carrot Theatre, HowlRound, National Institutes of Health, American Public Health Association, US Department of State
Confessions of a Coconut, Playwright, O'Neill NPC Semi-finalist 2024, Women Playwrights International Conference Alternate 2019, Oxford New Writing Festival 2019, Arellano Theater 2017
Bandera, Playwright, Arellano Theater
Blind Guy, Playwright Swirnow Theater

SELECTED PRESS:

The New York Times: ER Doctors Misdiagnose Patients with Unusual Symptoms
WYPR, NPR Baltimore: Rousuck's Review: COVID Monologues; Rousuck's Review: Is Edward Snowden Single?
BroadwayWorld: COVID Monologues Playwrights and Partner Theaters Announced, Single Carrot Theater Announces the COVID Monologues, Art and Activism Masterclass COVID Monologues Announced
The Baltimore Sun: A Complex Journey to Parenthood in Samsara
Bmore Art: COVID Monologues: Pick of the Week,