County Council of Howard County, Maryland

2026 Legislative Session | Legislative day # 12

RESOLUTION NO. 178 - 2026

Introduced by: Chairperson at the request of the County Executive

Short Title: Appointment - Gemma Holgate - LGBTQIA+ Commission

Title: A RESOLUTION confirming the appointment of Gemma Holgate to the LGBTQIA+ Commission.

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This Resolution was read the third time and was Adopted ✓, Adopted with amendments ___, Failed ___, Withdrawn ___ by the County Council on Oct 30, 2026.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 6.347 and 12.218 of the Howard County Code provide for a LGBTQIA+ Commission in Howard County; and

WHEREAS, the County Executive has proposed the appointment of Gemma Holgate as a member of the LGBTQIA+ Commission; 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 LGBTQIA+ Commission to serve from the passage of this Resolution to October 30, 2029 or until a successor is appointed and confirmed:

Gemma Holgate
Columbia, Maryland

GEMMA HOLGATE

COMMUNITY ADVOCATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I am a passionate advocate for LGBTQ+ rights with lived experience, both as a member of the LGBTQ+ community and as a parents of queer kids. I lead a LGBTQ+ advocacy nonprofit in Howard County supporting queer youth through a strong partnership with HCPSS. I worked in various engineering roles with increasing responsibility over a 16-year career before leaving the workforce to focus on family and community advocacy opportunities.

KEY STRENGTHS

- Relationship development
- Problem solving
- Financial planning
- Empathy and understanding
- Integrity and commitment to excellence

CORE SKILLS

- Community connection
- Technical and analytical analysis
- Leadership and responsibility
- Clear communication

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Master of Science, Mechanical Engineering
August 2015

The University of Texas at Austin

Bachelor of Science, Mechanical Engineering
May 2004

WORK / VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Community Allies of Rainbow Youth

President (2024-current) / Treasurer (2021-2024)

- Lead Howard County-based LGBTQ+ advocacy organization.
- Provide public presence for organization at community events such as Pride festivals, TDoV, and HCPSS partner events.
- Engage in state-level advocacy in Annapolis, including presenting to the LGBTQ+ Caucus.
- Develop budget and provide quarterly reports on the financial health of the organization.
- Write successful grants in partnership with HCPSS to get $41,000 over two years through the Howard County YEP! grant program for youth programming.
- Develop and administer candidate questionnaires to help educate voters about candidate's positions on issues that impact the LGBTQ+ community.
- Coordinate Rainbow Ribbon School program development and annual review.

Operating Budget Review Committee

Secretary and Committee Member | September 2025 - current

- Advise Howard County Board of Education on matters pertaining to the operating budget.
- Meet with HCPSS central office and executive staff to better understand issues impacting the school system budget.
- Compile and distribute meeting minutes.

General Electric / Baker Hughes

Engineering Manager and Senior Engineer | April 2011 - September 2020

- Responsible for the design, development, and qualification testing of surface wellhead equipment, including gate valves, chokes and actuators in compliance with American Petroleum Institute specification 6A.
- Manage multiple engineering teams, including other engineering managers.
- Mentor and coach employees in both technical and career topics.
- Manage training plan and budget for the department.
- Holder of 4 US Patents for oil & gas equipment.

Wood Group Pressure Control

Lead Engineer | September 2004 - April 2011

- Responsible for the design, development, and qualification testing of surface wellhead equipment, including gate valves, chokes and actuators in compliance with American Petroleum Institute specification 6A.
- Analyze new and existing designs including Finite Element Analysis, Computational Fluid Dynamics and industry standard calculation methods. Tools used include ANSYS, MathCAD, and STAR-CCM+.
- Design and oversee product validation testing including hands-on experience.
- Engineering support to worldwide service and manufacturing locations.