



Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs



ANNUAL REPORT
2012



MISSION

The Governor’s Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs serves as an advisory board to the Governor and agencies within the Executive Department on matters relating to the Middle Eastern American population of Maryland, including matters relating to economic, workforce and business development.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Governor..... pg. 4

Message from the Executive Director..... pg. 5

Message from the Chair pg. 6

Commissioners..... pg. 7

Executive Summary pg. 9

Middle Eastern American Legislative Night 2012 pg. 10

International Delegationspg. 11

New Americans Festival.....pg. 12

Middle Eastern American Business Summitt.....pg. 13

Interfaith Initiatives.....pg. 14

Identifying Our Constituents.....pg. 15



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A MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR

Dear Friends:

On October 11, 2007 I signed an executive order to establish the Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs to effectively address the concerns of the Middle Eastern American community. I am proud to join the staff and members of the Commission in presenting their -2012 report.

Diversity is one of Maryland's greatest strengths.

As we make steady progress in our One Maryland, I will rely on the Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs to help expand opportunities for the growing Middle Eastern American community in business, employment, education and many other areas.

Sincerely,

Martin O'Malley
Governor



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

The Governor's Office of Community Initiatives (GOCI) coordinates community and volunteer activities statewide and advises the Governor on policies to enhance and improve community programs. This Office also oversees the work of the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism, Volunteer Maryland and community affairs services within the Executive Branch of Maryland government. Additionally, GOCI coordinates outreach to ethnic communities across Maryland, overseeing the Governor's Office and Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Affairs, the Governor's Commission on African Affairs, the Governor's Commission on Hispanic Affairs, the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs, and the Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs.

As a Governor's Coordinating Office, GOCI is able to engage the resources of multiple State agencies and coordinate policy and activities related to community initiatives. By creating the Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs, Governor O'Malley has affirmed his strong commitment to the Middle Eastern American community.

Under the leadership of Chair Anwer Hasan, Vice Chair Rafi Rone and Assistant Director Iman Awad, The Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs has already become an integral part of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives. Together, we expect to make great strides toward ensuring greater access and opportunities for Middle Eastern Americans living in Maryland. In order to achieve this goal, we will continue to reach out to the community, engage key stakeholders, and mobilize participation in support of community initiatives.

Israel C. "Izzy" Patoka
Executive Director
Governor's Office of Community Initiatives



A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSION CHAIR

On behalf of the Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs I am honored to bring you our 2012 Annual Report. This past year the Commission worked on initiatives as diverse as interfaith dialogues to business summits. From listening to our community's needs and concerns we adapted our work plan to address what was most important.

Following our 2011 Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) program initiative, the Commission continued to work with the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Office of MBE to promote the inclusion of Middle Eastern Americans to the program. The Commission hopes to continue building on this progress and we will continue to report updates.

In addition, the Commission worked in 2012 to raise awareness on business opportunities in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region. Our Business Summit featured Deputy Secretary of the Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED) Dominick Murray, Maryland Israel Development Center (MIDC) Chairman Abba Poliakoff and Vice President of Business for the National U.S. Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) Amin Salam. Over 60 business professionals from across the state attended to listen to DBED, MIDC and NUSACC discuss the business outlook and potential opportunities to expand Maryland relations in the region. This discussion served as a precursor to the Governor's 2013 trade mission to the Middle East.

Closing the year, the Commission highlighted our interfaith component by hosting filmmakers Gerald Krell and Meyer Odze's of groundbreaking film "Three Faiths, One God" for an interfaith film screening and food drive. Members of the Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities attended and raised over 270 pounds of food for the Maryland Food Bank.

As we continue our work in 2013 we have many more new challenges to address. We look forward to hearing from our community and for your participation to help us keep our work plan in accordance to your needs and concerns. Our meetings are free and open to the public. You can stay updated on our progress from our website, and on Facebook and Twitter.

Thank you,

Anwer Hasan, Chair
Governor's Commission on
Middle Eastern American Affairs



Anwer Hasan, Chairman pictured left with Governor Martin O'Malley at the US World Islamic Forum

COMMISSIONERS

Anwer Hasan, P.E., Chair

- Vice President, Business Unit Director, EA Engineering
- Chairman, Requirement Committee for Base Realignment and Closure Task Forces for Howard County and Baltimore City
- Member, Higher Education Commission
- Member, Howard County Muslim Council

Rafi Rone, Vice Chair

- Director of Jewish and Israel Initiatives, Joseph & Harvey Meyerhoff Family Charitable Funds
- Board Member, Jewish Communal Service Association
- Fellow, Ralph I. Goldman International

Barry Bogage

- Executive Director, Maryland/Israel Development Center
- Board Member, Montgomery County Sister Cities, Inc.
- Advisory Board Member, TowsonGlobal, Towson University's International Incubator

Sarit Brosh

- Financial Advisor, Financial Planning Specialist, Morgan Stanley Smith Barney
- Member, Maryland/Israel Development Center
- Life Member, Hadassah
- Board Member, Ten Li Yad

Salwa Elgebaly, Ph.D.

- President and CEO, Nour Heart, Inc.
- Adjunct Assistant Professor, United States Naval Academy
- Member, Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies, United States Naval Academy
- Commissioner, Anne Arundel Commission for Women
- Director, Anne Arundel Muslim Council

Enas Elhanafi

- Adjunct Faculty, Montgomery College, Rockville
- Student Outreach Coordinator, Montgomery College, Rockville
- Member, The Greater Washington Association of Teachers of Foreign Languages

Dorreya (Didi) Elmenshawy

- Former Director, Construction and Buildings Inspection, Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development

Bagher Fardanesh, Ph.D.

- Member, American Society for Training and Development, Maryland Chapter
- Management Consultant, Small Business Development Center
- CEO & Founder, Piaget Consulting

Miriam Galston, Ph.D., J.D.

- Associate Professor, George Washington University Law School
- Member, Advisory Board, Bright Horizons Child Care Center
- Co-Chair, Committee on Political and Lobbying Organizations and Activities
- Member, American Bar Association
- Member, DC Bar Association

Farzaneh Riar

- Member, Governor O'Malley Transition Team for Department of Health & Mental Hygiene
- Member, American Public Health Association
- Member, Association of Schools of Public Health

Mubariz Rizvi

- Chief Executive Officer, FiberElectronics, LLC
- Founding Member, Maryland Middle East American Chamber of Commerce
- Member, Human Rights Department Howard County, Hate Crime Intervention Panel

Amin Salam

- Vice President, Global Business Development, National US Arab Chamber of Commerce

Sam Shihadeh

- Electrical Engineer, JDSU
- President, American Federation of Ramallah Palestine
- Advisory Board Member, Network for Arab American Professionals

Chadi Soliman

- Assistant General Manager, Best Western Plus Hotel & Conference Center
- Certified Tourism Ambassador, Baltimore Tourism Ambassador Program
- Member, Maryland Middle East American Chamber of Commerce

Julian Spirer

- Founder, Spirer Law Firm, P.C.
- Member, Higher Education Transition Group
- Former President, AmHatorah Congregation
- Former President, Barney Neighborhood House

Joseph Taylor

- Director of Program Development, Center for Academic Partnerships, Academy for Educational Development

Siron Zidan

- President, Heart of Islam Foundation, Inc.

Staff

Iman Awad
Assistant Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs (GCMEAA) was created under the leadership of the O'Malley/Brown Administration in 2008 through Executive Order 01.01.2007.22. Being the first state-level Commission of its kind, the Commission aims to set a standard for other states. Focusing on business, workforce, and community development the GCMEAA every year establishes a work plan to fulfill the development in the three arenas as charged by the Executive Order.

Taking a more aggressive stance on positioning Maryland on a global scale, the Commission's business committee was afforded the opportunity to host in October the first Middle Eastern Business Summit. The Summit hosted speakers from the Department of Business and Economic Development, the Maryland Israel Development Center and the National U.S. Arab Chamber of Commerce. Over 60 business professionals attended the event and the feedback from the seminar was tremendous. As the Middle Eastern Commission formulates their 2013 work plan there will be an emphasis on continuing the dialog that the Summit started.

In 2012, the GCMEAA also focused its attention to creating an ongoing interfaith dialogues at the state level. With the spirit of the holidays, and with three major religions represented on the Commission, the Commission held an interfaith film screening, dialogues and food drive. Hosting leaders of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities, the Commission was pleased to have raised over 230 pounds of non-perishable items to the Maryland Food Bank. This initiative received positive feedback and the Commission is committed to continuing with this tradition in 2013.

One of the biggest accomplishments for the Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs was in regards to the 2012 Legislative Night. The Commission began to host the Legislative Night four years ago and has consistently held the event in Annapolis. The Legislative Night was attended by Governor Martin O'Malley, Lt. Governor Anthony Brown, Senator Jim Rosapepe and Mike Strautmanis from the White House Office of Public Engagement. Over 250 community members attended the evening where Maryland elected officials mingled with constituents and discussed important legislation items of the 2012 session.

As the Commission continues to strive to represent the diversity of the community in Maryland the following report details the 2012 accomplishments and highlights 2013 initiatives. To stay up to date on the Commission initiatives and events within the community, visit the Commission's website at: www.middleeastern.maryland.gov.

MIDDLE EASTERN AMERICAN LEGISLATIVE NIGHT 2012

In 2012, the Commission hosted the inaugural Middle Eastern American Legislative Night. The Legislative Night successfully brought the Middle Eastern American community to Annapolis to discuss legislation, meet with their local elected officials and to network with other constituents from all over the State. Showcasing intercultural and interfaith strengths, the Commission was grateful for the support from the following organizations:

- An-Nur Foundation
- Baltimore Jewish Council
- Dar-al-Taqwa
- Frederick County Muslim Council
- Howard County Muslim Council
- Idara-e-Jaferia
- Islamic Center of Maryland
- Jewish Community Relations Council
- Maryland-Israel Development Center

The Commission was honored to host Governor Martin O'Malley, Lt. Governor Anthony Brown, Senator Jim Rosapepe, and Mr. Mike Strautmanis representing President Barack Obama. The program, focused on the Dream Act Referendum and the importance of in-state tuition for our immigrant communities. Both Governor O'Malley and Lt. Governor Brown emphasized the importance of improving the accessibility and the cost of higher education. In addition, Lt. Governor Brown also initiated a discussion about health care improvement and legislation aimed to reduce disparities.

Over 300 people attended the event including leaders from the Christian, Muslim and Jewish interfaith communities. Through the event, the Commission demonstrated our diversity while uniting our community together in support of legislation concerning healthcare, education, safety and business. This Legislative Night has become an annual program for the Commission in order to bring together our community to discuss important issues of legislation and to introduce our community to their respective elected officials.

The Commission looks forward to continuing our Legislative Nights in upcoming years and to make the Maryland Middle Eastern Legislative Night an annual Annapolis event which brings together the Governor, the Administration and our community.



INTERNATIONAL DELEGATIONS

In June 2012, the Commission joined Secretary of State John P. McDonough in welcoming a delegation representing various provinces from Pakistan. The Delegation included:

- Mr. Akbar Hussain Durrani, Secretary, Home and Tribal Affairs, Government of Balochistan
- Mr. Israr Ullah Khan Gandapur, Member, Provincial Assembly, Kyber Pakhtunkhwa
- Mr. Safiullah Gul, Peshawar Bureau Chief, Dunya News
- Ms. Rehana Saeed Hashimi, Lecturer, Political Science, Punjab University
- Mr. Mir Wais Kasi, Lecturer, International Relations, University of Balochistan
- Mr. Adil Jawad Khan, Senior Reporter, Daily Express, Karachi
- Mr. Adnan Khan, Member, Provincial Assembly, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
- Mr. Taj Muhammad, Member, Provincial Assembly, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
- Mr. Atta Ullah Rajar, Islamabad Bureau Chief, Sindh TV News
- Mr. Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi, Lecturer, International Relations, University of Peshawar

Commission Chairman, Anwer Hasan joined by Commissioner Mubariz Razvi welcomed the delegation and participated in their Annapolis agenda. The main focus of the Pakistani delegation included, examining the key players and the processes of formulating, articulating and implementing foreign policy in the U.S. democratic system; reviewing U.S. foreign policy priorities and goals, and to explore U.S. perspectives on these issues; and exploring the influence of the media, Non-Governmental Organizations, academia, and other associations in contributing to the global community and shaping U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Following the Pakistani Delegation in June, the Commission welcomed a delegation of Middle Eastern students from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Iraq. The program was hosted through the U.S. State Department and Temple University. The program was designed to help the students advance their knowledge of the U.S.; to identify and learn the principles, values, and practices of interfaith dialogue; and offer the opportunities to learn and grow through significant engagement with American citizens of diverse backgrounds.

The Commission, in partnership with the Secretary of State's Office and International Program Director, Mandy Nitsch, organized a program for the students which included meetings with:

- The Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs
- Maryland Secretary of State's Office
- The Governor's Federal Policy Office
- Tour of the Maryland State House
- U.S. Naval Academy

The Commission welcomes the opportunity to participate in foreign delegation visits to Maryland. Working in conjunction with the Secretary of State's Office the Commission is able to meet, network and stay connected to potential opportunities abroad.

NEW AMERICANS FESTIVAL

In September 2012, the National Immigrant Integration Conference was hosted in Baltimore City. The Conference focused on empowering immigrants to build stronger, healthier communities and ensuring the immigrant community has the opportunity to become integral members of the U.S. communities they call home. The Commissions joined Governor Martin O'Malley who served as a Conference keynote speaker.

In addition, the Commissions organized and hosted a full day outdoor New Americans Festival. Commission Chair, Anwer Hasan, along with other Commission Chairs spoke at the festival about the importance of ethnic communities engaging in Maryland's civic life.

The festival showcased various ethnic performances including traditional dancing and music from various backgrounds. The Commission also organized for various vendors at the festival to educate participants on all the resources available to immigrant communities.



MIDDLE EASTERN AMERICAN BUSINESS SUMMIT

As part of the Commission's executive charge there is a focus on business development. Taking this charge, the Commission hosted over 60 business professionals in Montgomery County in an event entitled "Middle Eastern Opportunities: Here and Abroad." The discussion focused on business resources for Middle Eastern American business in Maryland in tandem with business opportunities in the Middle East North African (MENA) region. The Deputy Secretary of the Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED), Dominick Murray, served as the evening keynote speaker.

Deputy Secretary Murray discussed DBED's ample resources for Maryland business in addition to Maryland incentive for foreign businesses to do business in the State. Specifically, he highlighted the Maryland key sectors of IT, telecommunications, biotechnology and defense. Maryland's strategic positioning close to Washington D.C. and access to an international airport and port makes this state ideal for foreign direct investment (FDI). In this regard the Commission is looking to work in partnership with DBED to help identify opportunities and to also inform our community of the resources through DBED for Middle Eastern American businesses in the State.

The Summit also included a panel of speakers from the Maryland Israel Development Center (MIDC) and National U.S. Arab Chamber. Abba Poliakoff, Chairman of MIDC, and Amin Salam, Vice President of Business for NUSACC, discussed business opportunities available in the entire MENA region. The Commission will continue these business events to promote a stronger business relationship between Maryland and MENA.



INTERFAITH INITIATIVES

In December 2012, the Commission created an initiative to celebrate our religious diversity and promote interfaith dialogue in tandem with community service. The Commission held a screening of the ground breaking documentary Three Faiths, One God and hosted the filmmakers Gerald Krell and Meyer Odzer. The film compares the similarities and differences in the three Abrahamic religious traditions. And according to the filmmakers "it also examines how people of goodwill in the Abrahamic faith communities are coming to terms with historical conflicts that impact their lives today, the crisis of the fundamentalist approach to religious pluralism, and tearing down barriers to understanding and respect."



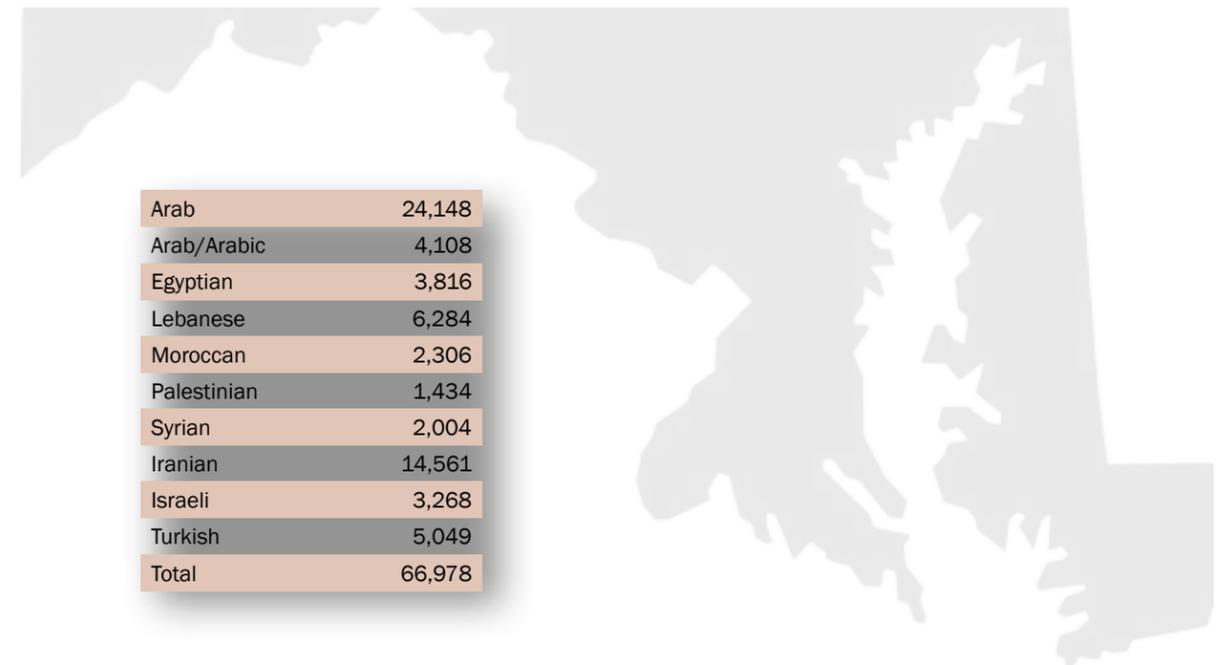
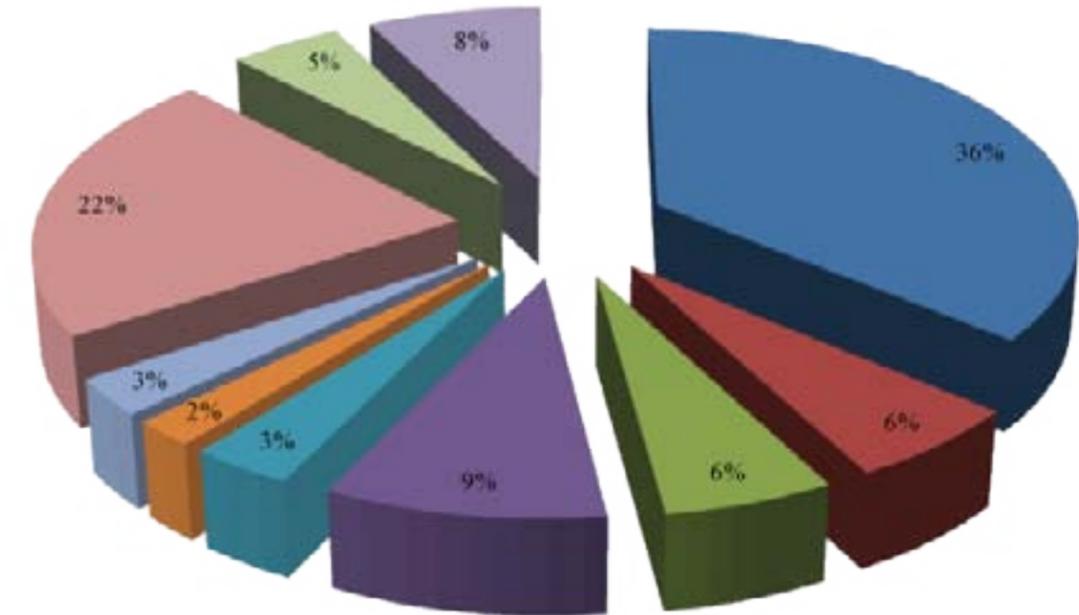
In the Judaic, Christian and Islamic traditions there is an emphasis on charity and service. In this regard, the Commission partnered with the Maryland Food Bank and requested attendees to donate non-perishable items. Over 50 community members attended the dialogue and combined raised over 250 pounds of food to the Maryland Food Bank. Following the screening, Commission Vice Chair, Rafi Rone, moderated a question and answer session between the filmmakers and attendees. The Commission values and strives to provide platforms for dialogue and to strengthen our relationship with our diverse community.

Concluding the evening, there was a call for action from the community to engage on a larger level and to encourage further interfaith educational programs and to promote statewide interfaith understanding.



MIDDLE EASTERN AMERICAN POPULATION IN MARYLAND

■ Arab ■ Arab/Arabic ■ Egyptian ■ Lebanese ■ Moroccan ■ Palestinian ■ Syrian ■ Iranian ■ Israeli ■ Turkish



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Middle Eastern American Affairs**

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