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## Remarks from the 2019-2020 Chair

On behalf of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, it is my pleasure to present a brief summary of our FY20 Annual Report. This year has seen some exciting events as we introduced programming related to girls for the first time, and responded to serious issues brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The last of our 4 public hearings we held virtually, with over 100 attendees. We conducted an in depth survey with over 2500 respondents to gather information about how women were coping during the pandemic, which we presented to the Legislature and Administration in a detailed Report. We held 18 listening sessions for girls and young women. We turned both our annual Advocacy Day and our Commonwealth Heroines events on line, honoring over 130 heroines in a slideshow that can be seen on our website. In order to adapt to a remote format, we shifted Advocacy Day to online social media communications with legislators followed by 5 community meetings in 5 different regions of the state. All of this information helped to inform both legislative advocacy and policy efforts by the Commission. We also welcomed a new staff member as well as 11 interns.



Nina Kimball

MCSW 2019-2020 Chair

## Commissioners

Rebecca Bact, *Secretary, Auburndale*  
Penny Blaisdell, *Marblehead*  
Ruth Bramson, *Boston*  
Denella Clark, *Vice-Chair, Hyde Park*  
Jean Cotter Fox, *Assonet (Freetown)*  
Marianne Fleckner, *Westford*  
Liz Friedman, *Northampton*  
Allison Goldberg, *Marblehead*  
Audrey Hall, *Framingham*  
Patricia Hohl, *Framingham*  
Nina Kimball, *Chair, Plymouth*  
Leslie-Ann McGee, *Kingston*  
Maria Puppolo, *Springfield*  
Marlene Sallo, *Marina Bay*  
Sara Schnorr, *Holliston*  
Shaitia Spruell, *Springfield*  
Wendy Silver, *Needham*  
Phyllis Smith, *Franklin*  
Mary-Dith Tuitt, *Boston*

## Staff

Jill Ashton, *Executive Director*  
Sasha Heggie-Jackson, *Program Director*  
Mel Soto, *Communications and Events Coordinator*

## Interns

Veronica Cihlar  
Lucy Cheskin  
Emerson Johnston  
Emilia Kahn  
Carla Levy  
Christina Li  
Gwynn Lyons  
Paulina Martin  
Catherine May  
Nathalie Rojas  
Anna Vande Velde

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## Charges:

*Under MA Chapter 3, Section 66 of the Massachusetts General Laws, the MCSW is empowered to:*

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Study, review and report on the status of women in the Commonwealth

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Advise executive and legislative bodies on the effect of proposed legislation on women

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Inform leaders of business, education, health care, state and local governments and the communications media of issues pertaining to women

---

Provide referrals and serve as a resource of information on issues pertaining to women

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Identify and recommend qualified women for positions at all levels of government

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Promote and facilitate collaboration among local women's commissions and among women's organizations in the state

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Serve as a liaison between government and private interest groups concerned with issues affecting women

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## Organization

The Commission is comprised of **19 commissioners** who are appointed by one of **four appointing authorities**: the Governor, the Senate President, the Speaker of the House, and the Caucus of Women Legislators. Commissioners serve in a voluntary capacity, and the work of the Commission is facilitated by two full-time and one part-time staff members who are assisted by year-round interns. The full Commission meets monthly, September through June, as does the MCSW Executive Committee. In addition, each commissioner is a member of at least one standing committee that generally meets monthly. The standing committees include:

Legislative and Public Policy Committee

Program and Planning Committee

Budget and Personnel Committee

This 2019-2020 Annual Report includes the Commission's activities and findings for the period of July 2019 to June 2020.

## **2020 Recommendations to Appointing Authorities**

The MCSW gathered information from a diverse set of stakeholders to determine its recommendations. It held four public hearings across the Commonwealth, convened and connected with its 11 regional commissions to understand local issues impacting women, partnered with community organizations, and engaged in ongoing discussion with legislators, and drew from its 19 commissioners' perspectives and experiences as leaders in their communities.

During public hearings, the most frequently addressed concerns raised by women and girls included the lack of access to affordable housing and child care, domestic violence, lack of culturally competent and gender-specific health care, economic security, and the need for increased female representation in government and positions of leadership. The MCSW believes that the best way to respond to these concerns is by combining programming and policy. As a result, in addition to its advocacy activities, the MCSW has implemented programs such as the Girls Initiative, a new event that convenes girls, girl-serving and advocacy organizations, and legislators to share and learn from each other.

### **MCSW Budget**

Salaries: \$153,760.00

Office Expenses: \$38,600.00

Supplemental budget allocation to support Girls Initiative pilot: \$25,000

Total: \$223,170.00

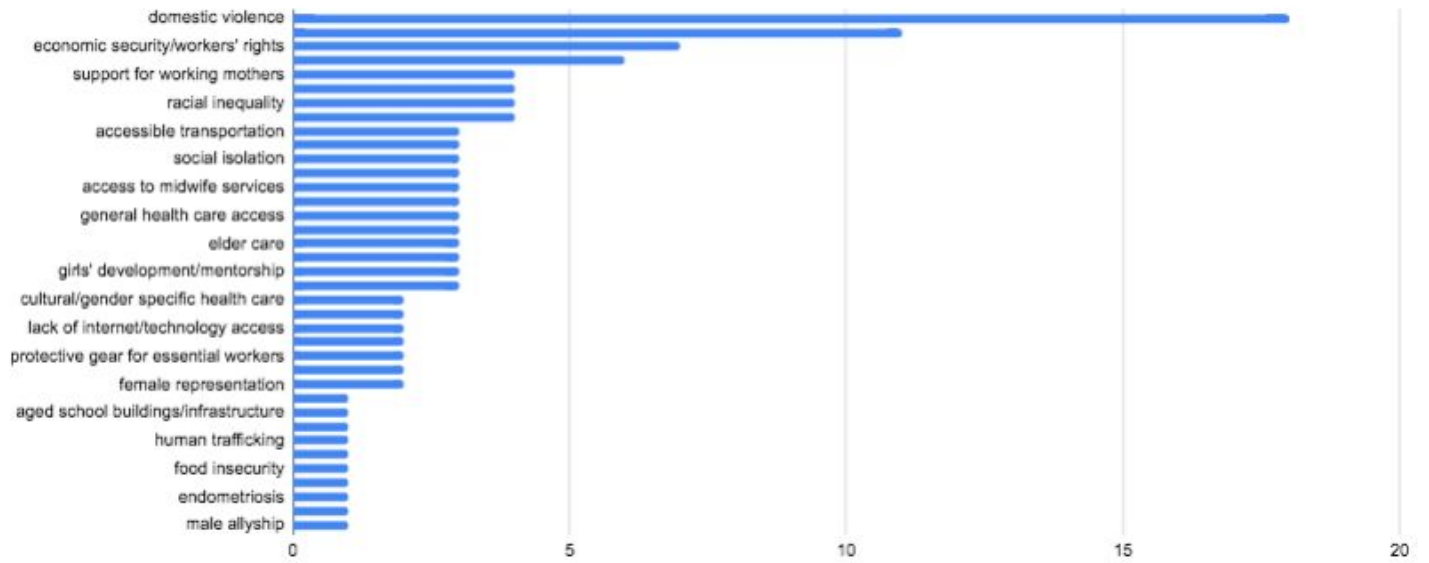
### **Programs, Advocacy, and Education**

In keeping with its mandate to study and report on the status of women and girls living in the Commonwealth, the Commission holds regional public hearings to hear the concerns of women. Area legislators and public officials are invited to attend. These public hearings are essential for the MCSW since they provide an opportunity for women from the entire Commonwealth to share their concerns. The Commission uses hearing testimony to shape and influence its legislative advocacy work and its annual recommendations to the appointing authorities. Hearing testimonies are a source of both information and direction.

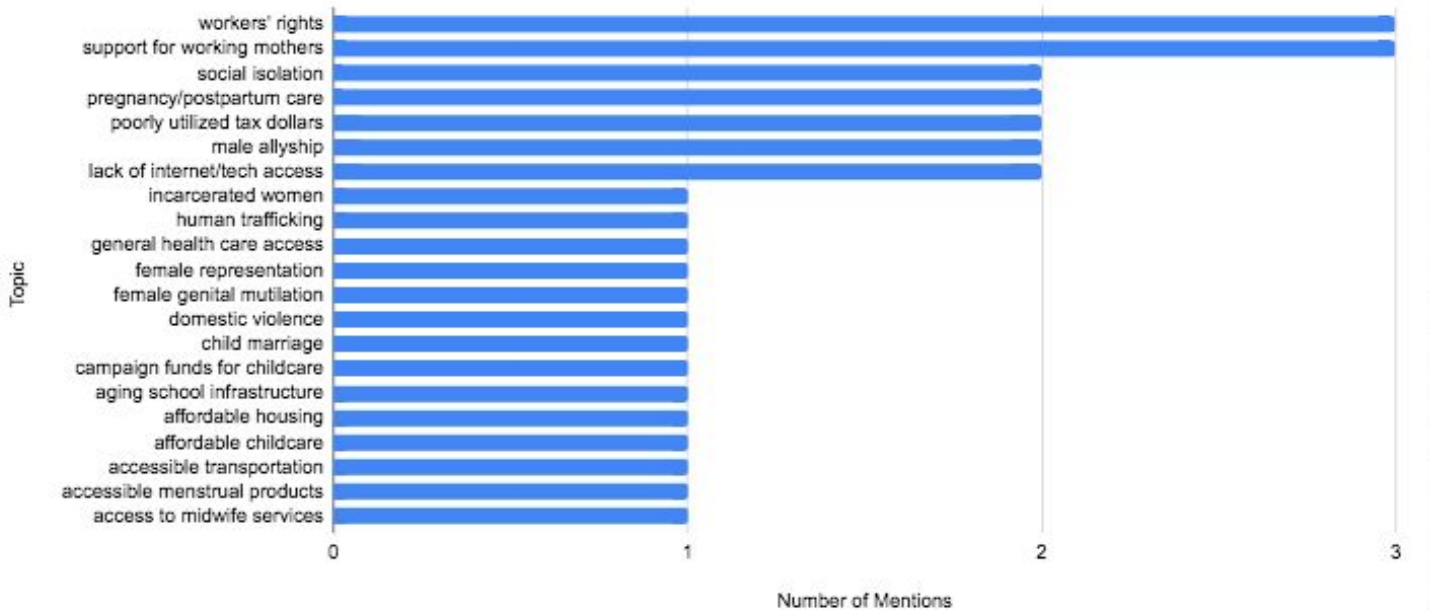
The MCSW hosted four public hearings this past year, one of which was conducted virtually. Full reports of each public hearing are included in the appendix.

The following graphics indicate the frequency of various topics raised during public hearings. There were 124 testifiers, 37 identified topics, and 118 topic mentions. The most frequently referenced topics were domestic violence, decarceration, women's economic security, and mental health.

### # Topic Mentions 2019-2020 MCSW Hearings



### # Topic Mentions 2019-2020 MCSW Hearings (before COVID-19)



## Public Hearings



### Great Barrington

- Key issues: overworked and overburdened mothers; lack of benefits for working mothers; decrease in midwifery; lack of culturally competent/gender-specific health care; domestic violence; access to transportation; affordable housing; childcare; social isolation; utilization of tax dollars



### Weymouth

- Key issues: campaign funds for childcare, workers' rights, female genital mutilation, domestic violence



### Springfield

- Key issues: lack of female representation on city boards/councils; menstrual product availability in schools; internet access; infrastructure/transportation; affordable housing; childcare; human trafficking; workforce development training; support during pregnancy



### COVID-19 Virtual Hearing

- Key issues: job and income loss, housing, domestic violence, food insecurity, mental health issues, lack of access to health care (especially for pregnant women), vulnerabilities among incarcerated women and elderly residents, child care for essential workers

## MCSW Events and Programs

### *International Women's Day 2020*

Since 2001, the MCSW has served as a member of the multi-organization coalition responsible for planning the Boston-area International Women's Day Breakfast. Each year, the Breakfast addresses a different topic relevant to women's advancement and equity. The 2020 event was slated to include a panel discussion around the theme of "Sharing the Torch: Intentionally Building Diverse Leadership Through Intergenerational Activism" featuring women in leadership roles from throughout the Boston area. Unfortunately, the 2020 Breakfast, originally scheduled for March 12, 2020, had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the MCSW intends to remain a member of the planning coalition for future events.



## *Advocacy Day*

On May 13, 2020, the MCSW hosted a Virtual Women’s Advocacy Day in the form of a social media campaign and a series of virtual community meetings, preserving the opportunity for constituents to make their voices heard and engage with legislators despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 100 people participated in the social media campaign, including constituents, regional and state commissioners, partner organizations, and legislators. Additionally, the Commission hosted five virtual meetings intended to replace the small group discussions and legislator visits that would be possible through the traditional in-person format.

...  
“They don’t make  
the news, they  
make the  
difference.”  
...

## *Seventeenth Annual Commonwealth Heroines Celebration*

In lieu of an in-person event, the MCSW conducted its seventeenth annual Commonwealth Heroines Celebration, previously called Unsung Heroines, through virtual outreach. Over time, this event has honored women from cities and towns across the Commonwealth who, often without fanfare or recognition, make the Commonwealth a better place to work and live in—“They don’t make the news, they make the difference.” The Commission partners with state legislators to identify women who perform significant acts of service on behalf of their communities. The nomination process identifies women of all ages and economic, political, geographic and ethnic backgrounds. Although the MCSW could not host the 2020 ceremony at the State House, the Heroines still received recognition through a program book published online and a Facebook live slideshow, which received broad engagement.

## *COVID Report*

Within one week of Governor Charlie Baker’s March 10, 2020 declaration of the State of Emergency over the coronavirus outbreak, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women took action to collect and report on how COVID-19 is impacting women and girls in the Commonwealth, and offering recommendations as public policy responses are being developed.

On Thursday, April 2, 2020, the Commission convened a virtual public hearing with more than 100 attendees. Testimony was shared verbally during the hearing and in writing prior to and after the hearing. Testimony from the hearing indicated:

- A significant increase in Domestic Violence incidents
- Pregnant women fear having to deliver their babies alone
- Incarcerated women are at risk due to a lack of social distancing in prisons
- Elder residents both in care facilities, and within the Commonwealth have been dangerously, and increasingly more isolated
- Youth are being cut off from essential support programs
- Financial insecurity from loss of income
- Limited childcare options and availability
- Food insecurity and a lack of information about accessing financial resources

Immediately following the hearing, the Commission launched an online survey to supplement the hearing findings and to collect more data to identify and support areas for immediate attention. The survey, which was distributed using social media and email between April 3, 2020 and April 9, 2020, was completed by 2,523

Massachusetts residents from more than 250 communities throughout the Commonwealth. Findings from the survey indicate:

- 43% of respondents are experiencing anxiety and depression
- Wide-ranging financial impact including loss of jobs, income, and childcare
- Difficulty accessing food and paying bills
- Concern over access to health care and risk of infection

[The report includes key findings](#) on the impact of COVID-19 in the areas of Economic Impact, Health Issues, Domestic Violence, Essential Workers, Incarcerated Women

Along with the work of evolving key government initiatives, and policies and legislation, the Commission's next steps are to include further outreach and provide updates on current challenges/obstacles facing women and girls in the Commonwealth.

### *Girls' Initiative*

In lieu of the planned in-person Girls' Summit, the MCSW conducted a virtual Girls' Initiative across a two-week span in May; in total, the Initiative comprised eighteen listening sessions with young women from across the Commonwealth. These sessions reflected the MCSW's ongoing commitment to provide girls and young women a forum for voicing their experiences and concerns, specifically within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. [The findings](#) from these sessions will be used to inform future programming initiatives, policy recommendations, and advocacy events.

### *MCSW Internship Program*

Preparing the next generation of leaders remains an important component for the Commission. As an extension of this commitment, MCSW offers internship opportunities to students from universities and colleges across the country. Internships, both for credit and non-credit, are extended during fall semester, spring semester, and summer months. The Commission hosted over 11 student interns this year. The program allows for a practical and substantive learning experience that guides and encourages women's leadership in government and public policy. For more information, or to apply, suitable candidates may visit our website: <http://www.mass.gov/women/>

### **Priority Legislation**

As a part of its mission to provide an effective voice and advocate for the women of Massachusetts, the MCSW identifies priority bills at the center of the MCSW's legislative focus and action. In the 2019-2020 year, the Commission focused on addressing women's political participation, economic security, protection from harassment, and access to menstrual products through the following legislation:

#### **An Act Supporting Working Parents Who Choose to Run for Public Office (S.408/H.639)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Sen. Patricia Jehlen and Reps. Mike Connolly and Joan Meschino

**Coalition:** Campaign Funds for Childcare Coalition – led by MCSW.

**Description:** Many working parents are discouraged from running for public office because of financial reasons. This bill would clarify that child care expenses related to campaigning are not considered personal expenses.

#### **An Act to Ensure Gender Parity on Public Boards and Commissions (H.4153, previously H.2711/S.1878)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Patricia Haddad and Sen. Jason Lewis

**Coalition:** Parity on Public Boards Coalition

**Description:** This bill would promote diversity in leadership and governance that broadly reflects the demographics of our Commonwealth. The composition of each appointed public board and commission in the Commonwealth shall broadly reflect that of the general public.

**An Act Relative to Wage Transparency (H.4464, previously H.3963)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Josh S. Cutler

**Description:** This petition would increase transparency between employers and potential employees by requiring the former to provide, upon request, the pay scale for the particular position sought by a potential employee

**An Act to Require Sexual Harassment Training (S.1057/H.1345)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Sen. Cynthia Creem and Rep. Christine Barber

**Coalition:** Led by MCSW.

**Description:** This bill would require Massachusetts employers to provide live and interactive workplace-specific sexual harassment training, as well as conduct climate surveys to identify risk factors and gauge the program's effectiveness. This training will promote respect in the workplace and avoid unlawful harassment, rather than simply focus on escaping liability.

**An Act to Increase Access to Disposable Menstrual Products in Prisons, Homeless Shelters, and Public Schools (S.1274/H.1959)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Sen. Patricia Jehlen and Reps. Jay Livingstone and Christine Barber

**Coalition:** I AM. Coalition – led by Mass NOW.

**Description:** This bill would ensure that free menstrual products are provided within prisons, homeless shelters, and public schools to individuals who menstruate.

**An Act to Ensure Compliance with the Anti-Shackling Law for Pregnant Incarcerated Women (S.1453)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Sen. Rebecca Rausch

**Description:** This bill would provide a mechanism to ensure compliance with the previously enacted legislation prohibiting the use of shackling for pregnant incarcerated women.

**An Act Relative to Medicaid Coverage for Doula Services (H.4780, previously H.1182)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Liz Miranda, Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa

**Description:** This bill would make doula services eligible for insurance coverage under both private insurance and MassHealth. Doulas would become eligible for coverage after completing requirements enumerated in the legislation.

**An Act Requiring One Fair Wage (H.1617/S.1082)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Tricia Farley-Bouvier, Sen. Patricia Jehlen

**Description:** This bill would eliminate the subminimum wage for tipped workers, setting a higher minimum cash wage to which tips would be added.

Additionally, the MCSW's Legislative and Public Policy Committee endorsed the following bills in response to the COVID-19 crisis:

**An Act Regarding Decarceration and COVID-19 (H.4652)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa

**Description:** This bill would provide for the pre-trial case review and potential release of individuals who fit certain criteria, including those detained solely for being unable to pay cash bail; those over fifty years of age; those who are immunocompromised; and those awaiting hearings based on probation violation allegations.

**An Act Providing Assistance to Vulnerable Populations During the COVID-19 Emergency (S.2647)**

**Lead Sponsor:** Senate Committee on Ways and Means

**Description:** This bill would remove means testing for certain assistance programs in response to the economic impact of COVID-19.

**Regional Commissions**

Modeled after the MCSW, the now 11 (three new commissions were established in 2018, closing the gap on state coverage) unfunded county and regional women’s commissions were legislatively created to study and report on the status of women and girls in their geographical areas as well as to provide permanent and effective voices for women and girls. Each county and regional commission reports its findings annually to MCSW.

Once legislation has passed to establish a county or regional commission, the MCSW solicits and reviews commissioner applications, makes appointments, hosts a formal inaugural event to have new commissioners sworn in, and conducts an opening session. After the initial appointments have been made and the opening session is conducted, the MCSW continues to offer significant support to the commissions and oversees the appointments and reappointments of commissioners. The MCSW frequently convenes with regional commissions in order to maintain strong partnerships and build the capacity of the regional commissions.

*MCSW Regional Commissions*

- **Berkshire County CSW** - 9 members from Berkshire County, established in 2005
- **Bristol County CSW** - 9 members from Bristol County, established in 2008
- **Cape Cod and Islands CSW** - 13 members from Barnstable, Dukes, and Nantucket Counties, established in 2009
- **Essex County CSW** - 9 members from Essex County, established in 2010
- **Worcester County CSW** - 9 members from Worcester County, established in 2013
- **MetroWest CSW** - 9 members representing lower Middlesex County as well as towns from Norfolk and Worcester counties, established in 2015
- **Hampden County CSW** - 9 members from Hampden County, established in 2017
- **Hampshire/Franklin Counties CSW** - 9 members from Hampshire and Franklin Counties, established in 2017
- **Eastern Regional CSW**—9 members representing Norfolk County, established in 2018
- **Plymouth County CSW**- 9 members from Plymouth County, established in 2018
- **Upper Middlesex CSW**—9 members representing the cities and towns of Middlesex County, established in 2018

## **Local Women's Commissions**

There are currently 11 local Women's Commissions that represent various cities and towns in the Commonwealth. While these Commissions are independent of MCSW, the Commission serves as a resource and partner and maintains contact with them on a regular basis. Local commissions include Boston Women's Commission; Brockton Mayor's Commission on Women's Issues; Brookline Commission for Women; Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women; Melrose Commission on Women; Newton Commission on the Status of Women; Quincy Mayor's Commission on Women; Somerville Commission for Women; Springfield Commission for Women; and Worcester City Manager's Advisory Committee on the Status of Women.

## Regional Commission Annual Reports

### BERKSHIRE COUNTY

*BCCSW Vision: To be an effective, inclusive voice and vehicle for action for all women and girls of Berkshire County*

#### **Mission**

The purpose of the Commission shall be to advance women toward full equity in all areas of life and to promote rights and opportunities for all women. The mission of the Berkshire County Commission on the Status of Women (BCCSW) is to provide a permanent, effective voice for women across Berkshire County that facilitates and fosters community and inclusiveness among women. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the full enjoyment of life for all women throughout their lives.

#### **Commissioners**

Donna Morelli, Co-Chair (*Pittsfield, MA*); Dana Rasso, Co-Chair, Secretary (*Pittsfield, MA*); Alexandra Demastrie, Vice Chair (*Lenox, MA*); Christine Haley, Treasurer (*Tyringham, MA*); Christina Daigneault (*Adams, MA*); Stephanie Bosley (*North Adams, MA*).

Halfway through our fiscal year, in December, we said goodbye to commissioners Meg Bossong (*Pittsfield*), Jennifer Kimball (*Pittsfield*), and Diane Sturtevant (*Windsor*). A powerhouse trio, their vast knowledge of the commission, of the county, and of the issues women and girls face here was immeasurably helpful.

We welcomed a new commissioner in May 2020, Andrea Wadsworth of Lee, and are currently working on recruiting two new commissioners to fill the empty slots.

#### **BCCSW Focus**

In May 2019, after a successful and illuminating listening session with incarcerated Berkshire County women who were housed at the Western Massachusetts Women's Correctional Center in Chicopee, BCCSW pledged to continue to focus on the intersections of the criminal legal system with the lives of women and girls in Berkshire County. Upon our return from summer break, we outlined our goals for scheduling listening sessions within the county.

In November, we were able to convene a listening session in Pittsfield that also served as the Berkshire County debut and presentation of the Research Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Western Massachusetts 2019, by the Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts. Rather than focus strictly on criminal legal issues, we invited community members to attend, listen, and share testimony on the issues they were most concerned about and impacted by. Attendance at this event was outstanding, with approximately 30 people turning out on a cold and snowy November night. Much of the report's [key findings](#) underlined areas of need in our predominantly rural county that echoed the testimony we had heard from incarcerated women in Chicopee: disparities in healthcare (particularly in mental healthcare and substance use treatment),

childcare, and economic stability.

We heard from several women who attended, most of whom worked with girls or women in some capacity—District Attorney Andrea Harrington; a woman from Girls, Inc., in Pittsfield; a woman from Pittsfield Adult Learning Center; and a woman who works with homeless and trafficked youth throughout Western Massachusetts. They also detailed a lack of resources for women and girls (and gender-nonconforming youth) in the county.

The feedback we heard aligned with the commission’s stated goals last fiscal year, to wit: doing work to focus on transportation, affordable housing and housing stability, access to medical and mental health care and addiction treatment, and economic stability. We ended that evening with new ideas on how addressing socioeconomic disparities through listening sessions would also help inform and expand our focus on the criminal legal system.

The commission also attended and helped to promote a MCSW event in Great Barrington in October. This event was well-attended, predominantly by white, middle-class and upper-middle-class professionals. This is the perennial issue with Berkshire County: It’s a sizable area with large(ly white) rural swaths accompanied by a “town and gown” mentality. Like everywhere in the U.S., Berkshire County is also plagued by racism, but because many white people in the county consider it a “liberal, northern, intellectual” haven, they refuse to acknowledge this racism and often perpetuate it. The county is colloquially broken down into South County, Central County, North County, and “the hilltowns,” and it’s a challenge getting residents to think of the county as a whole.

We have identified some goals for our future listening sessions, because one thing we have noticed at public events is that attendees tend to be women *who work with women*, rather than the women themselves. This leads us to conclude that to hold successful listening sessions, we need:

- better representation of women experiencing poverty
- childcare
- transport
- multiple events, so as to get a larger representation from more rural areas and areas not serviced by our limited public transport

We eyed MCSW grants to fulfill these needs, but the onset of the COVID-19 has us rethinking what these listening sessions would look like and postponing them for the near future. Something we discussed last year, but were unable to do as a result of the pandemic, includes reformatting the legislative breakfast to be an invitation to Berkshire County elected officials to engage with the findings of the listening sessions. We recommit to that for this coming year.

### **Legislative and Electoral Advocacy**

The commission is well aware of the impact/influence current legislative issues can have on the women and girls of Berkshire County. Many discussions throughout the year focused on proposed legislation such as the

Roe Act, which would expand access to abortion care in the state regardless of an individual's age or ability to pay. We also discussed at length how the new Public Charge Law could affect residents of the immigrant community. Continuing our focus on women and girls in relation to the criminal justice system, we discussed current proposed legislation regarding access to phone calls and visitation to incarcerated people, recognizing that limited access to calls and visits was a main concern expressed by the women who testified during the visit to the Hampden County Women's Correctional facility.

In addition to the state commission's legislative priorities, we offered advocacy alerts to contact legislators about issues critical to women and girls in Berkshire County. We met with Debra Falzoi, who founded the National Workplace Bullying Coalition and has proposed legislation in Massachusetts around the topic of workplace dignity/abuse, fair wages, and fair time off. We also met with Shirley Edgerton of ROPE and Maria Rundle of the Flying Cloud Institute to discuss the planning of the MCSW's Girls' Listening Sessions within Berkshire County.

### **Goals for FY 2021**

Our monthly meetings almost always involve report-backs on both institutional and individual racism within our community. Community members who attend our meetings recount experiences they've had personally. At the same time, we are well aware of the lack of racial and socioeconomic diversity within our own ranks and are committed to the recruitment of new Commissioners to broadly represent the geographic, racial, age, and economic diversity of women and girls in Berkshire County. We have chosen to fill the two remaining seats with women who bring new perspectives and lived experience to the commission, and one of our stated goals is to communicate to potential candidates that current or prior substance use, incarceration, and/or mental health issues are not impediments to being on the commission.

It's difficult to say what the next fiscal year will look like for Berkshire County and for our commission. How soon will things return to "normal"; will they ever? What we can say is that we can already see the outside impact the pandemic has had on women in our community. Women head up [80% of single-parent](#) households in Western Massachusetts, they work lower-paying jobs than men, and additional, unpaid labor often falls to them.

One bright spot of the pandemic has been the opportunity to hold online monthly meetings, rather than in-person meetings. We have had many more attendees from the community thanks to the greater ease-of-entry to online conference calls and video calls. If the rules for Open Meetings don't revert to pre-COVID-19 requirements, I sense that we will have greater attendance at our monthly meetings and listening sessions.

We are excited to welcome new commissioners, and to collaborate with women- and girl-led groups in our community to better serve the women and girls of Berkshire County.

*Submitted by Dana Rasso*



## CAPE COD AND ISLANDS

### ***Commissioners***

Tina Games, *Chair (Harwich)*  
Joan Walsh-Freedman, *Vice Chair (South Yarmouth)*  
Linda Cebula, *Treasurer (Harwich Port)*  
Lisa McNeill, *Secretary (Yarmouth Port)*

\*\*\*\*\*

Katia Dacunha (*Hyannis*)  
Lisa Malcolm (*Osterville*)  
Lisa McNeill (*Harwich*)  
Lynda wan-N'Tani (*Harwich*)

\*\*\*\*\*

Natalia Frois (*Hyannis*) – *\*appointed January 2020*  
Mary Reardon Johnson (*South Yarmouth*) – *\*appointed January 2020*  
Mary Waygan (*Mashpee*) – *\*appointed January 2020*  
Tara Wallace (*Hyannis*) – *\*appointed January 2020*

Tracy Johnson (*Brewster*) – *\*completed term December 2019*  
Melissa Murphy (*Brewster*) – *\*completed term December 2019*  
Laura Innis (*Hatchville*) – *\*resigned December 2019*

### **Purpose**

The Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women was enacted by law and established in 2009 to advance women toward full equity in all areas of life and to promote rights and opportunities for all women.

The Commission is composed of thirteen appointed women who have had prior experience working toward the improvement of the status of women. Commissioners are drawn from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, sexual orientation, and socio-economic backgrounds from throughout Cape Cod and the Islands.

The Commission is empowered to:

- Study, review, and report on the status of women on the Cape and Islands
- Inform leaders of business, education, health care, state and local governments and the communications media of issues pertaining to women
- Serve as a clearinghouse for information on issues pertaining to women
- Identify and recommend qualified women for appointed positions at all levels of government, including boards and commissions
- Promote and facilitate collaboration among local women's commissions and among women's organizations in the state.

The commission meets ten times each year. It is expected that commissioners attend as many meetings as possible, with more than three absences requiring a conversation about cause. Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month from September through June from 5:00-7:00 pm.

## **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women is to provide a permanent, effective voice for women across Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the full enjoyment of life for all women throughout their lives.

## **Goals for 2019-2020**

The Cape and Islands Commission moved into year two of the strategic plan (created in October 2018) which focused on two key issues that surfaced from the 2017 regional survey and the 2017-18 public hearings - *healthcare and housing*. It was agreed that our three main workgroups would continue with their respective charges: (1) Hear more voices/reach more women; (2) Advocate for legislative issues; (3) Increase CCICSW visibility.

The Commission agreed on the goals as listed below:

### *Hearing More Voices/Reaching More Women:*

- Conduct one public hearing in November 2020
- Host a spring listening circle on Nantucket
- Compile testimony and discussion for reporting purposes

### *Advocating for Legislative Issues:*

- Identify state legislation related to housing and healthcare
- Follow implementation of legislation
- Explore actions at both state and local levels
- Keep CCICSW updated on legislative activity
- Attend MCSW Advocacy Day and meet with Cape and Islands legislators

### *Increasing Visibility:*

- Create and maintain CCICSW publicity/media list
- Send out media releases and flyers for public hearing and listening circle
- Send public hearing and listening circle reports to Cape and Islands legislators
- Maintain CCICSW Facebook page and explore other social media opportunities
- Research and update CCICSW website
- Follow through with training opportunities at Cape Cod Media Center

## **Membership Update**

The membership ad-hoc committee - which consisted of Joan Freedman, Anna Dunphy, Lynda wan-N'Tani, and Helen Bresnahan (emerita) - worked together to interview applicants to fill four vacancies. Four new Commissioners were appointed – Natalia Frois, Mary Reardon Johnson, Tara Wallace, Mary Waygan (all of

whom began their terms in January 2020). Each new Commissioner was assigned to a current Commissioner for individual orientation and mentoring.

### Treasurer's Report

*Ending Balance in treasury - June 30, 2019*  
Held in trust by State Commission: \$300.00  
Remainder of first MCSW grant: \$369.58

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Total funds available: \$669.58

*Ending balance in treasury - June 30, 2020*  
Held in trust by State Commission: \$300.00

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Total funds available: \$300.00

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Subsequent to June 30, 2019, we were disappointed to learn that the remaining funds from the original grant were returned to the Commonwealth as being unspent by June 30, 2019; therefore, we were unable to have any of those funds available for our commission's use. We were not aware that this grant needed to be spent in a certain timeframe. We were also disappointed to see that the funds could only be used as applied for in the application - if our situation changed, we could not rearrange lines or spend on something else, even if the expense continued the mission.

We have applied for \$700.00 in funding this Spring, but due to the COVID-19 situation, we do not expect to see any of those funds made available.

The recent applications, by quarter, have allotted the same amount of funds for each regional commission. We request that the State Commission consider that not all regional commissions are the same. The Cape & Islands Commission is exactly that - the 15 towns on the Cape as well as the two islands, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. We have not been able to maintain representation from the islands because of the travel issue. It is costly for a commissioner to pay out of pocket for the ferry trips in order to attend monthly meetings. While our regional commission does allow for a few remote participations, not having the person physically present creates difficulties in the communication/discussion process. Asking a person to fund this expense effectively means that only a person of some means will be able to serve - this completely excludes the very women that the Commission is attempting to serve and does not allow for diversity of commission membership. We would think that this same issue would hold true for state level commissioners who live west of Worcester - driving 150 miles to Boston and paying the tolls becomes expensive.

Additionally, it would make sense for the Cape commissioners to travel to the Islands, both for meetings and for our listening circles and public hearings. Again, the costs become prohibitive, and therefore we are not adequately serving our constituents.

While we recognize that the application for funds could be used to offset some of these travel issues, it

leaves no funding for things like ink cartridges (at \$50 per) or for refreshments for our listening circles and public hearings. We are working on being able to record our public meetings in order to broadcast and thereby reach more women, but there is a cost to this - it is not free. The State agency and the Commonwealth cannot expect the volunteer commissioners to continue to fund the expenses of the mission.

## **Working Group Summaries**

### ***Legislative***

The *Legislative* working group spent the year following bills that pertained to the legislative priorities set by MCSW, as well as bills that directly affect women and girls on Cape Cod and the Islands, especially those related to healthcare and housing (which were the top two concerns that came from our 2017 survey and 2018 hearings). The workgroup recommended seven bills for consideration by CCICSW (listed below) which were discussed at our March 2020 meeting and ranked in order of preference. The three bills in bold were approved as priority legislation.

CCICSW was represented at Advocacy Day (held virtually this year) by the following Commissioners: Tina Games, Natalia Frois, Tara Wallace, Mary Johnson – with Commissioner Anna Dunphy providing the CCICSW update at the regional convening/community meeting and Commissioners Lisa McNeill and Tara Wallace joining her for the listening/discussion segment.

The *Legislative* workgroup consisted of six Commissioners – Linda Cebula, Anna Dunphy, Lynda wan-N’Tani, Mary Waygan, Tara Wallace, and Mary Reardon Johnson (the latter three joining the workgroup after being appointed in January).

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Legislative Workgroup Recommendations for Full Commission Consideration (*Bills in bold were approved as priority legislation at the 3/11/20 meeting*)

#### **1. S.1209 An Act to remove obstacles and expand abortion access (The ROE Act)**

“The Commonwealth shall not restrict the use of medically appropriate methods of abortion or the manner in which the medically appropriate abortion is provided”

*The ROE Act is currently in the Joint Committee of the Judiciary; deadline to report out is July 31, 2020.*

#### **2. H.910/S.2519 An Act addressing barriers to care for mental health (The ABC Act)**

Mental Health parity recognizes that insurance coverage for mental health conditions and substance abuse disorders must be the same as coverage for physical health problems. This bill would create more equitable access to behavioral health care by improving enforcement through carrier self-reporting, addressing barriers created by time-consuming approval process, applying Parity across payers, and ensuring consistent application of medical necessity criteria.

*Passed unanimously by the Massachusetts Senate on 2/14/2020.*

### **3. (H.1264) Rental Arrearage Program**

Legislation to re-establish an upstream statewide rental arrearage program to help households avoid homelessness by providing back rental assistance and mortgage payments. (Co-Sponsors- Vieira, Fernandez, Hunt, Crocker) Sponsor: REP. MARJORIE DECKER

### **4. S.2310 An Act regulating the use of credit reports by employers**

A person shall not use a consumer report in connection with or as a criterion for employment purposes, request or procure a consumer report for employment purposes, or require an applicant to answer a question about the contents of a consumer report or the information contained in it regarding credit worthiness, credit standing or credit capacity. Note that there are exceptions for financial institution exempt executives/management, person signing checks, as required by other sections of federal or state laws, national security.....

### **5. H.909/S.590 An Act to require health care coverage for emergency psychiatric services**

Health care plans, whether private or state public plans, must provide for medically necessary services on a non-discriminatory basis.

### **6. (H.1288 & S.775) Housing Production Legislation**

Sponsors: REPS. KEVIN HONAN, ANDY VARGAS & SEN. JOSEPH BONCORE This legislation uses the Governor's Housing Choice bill as a foundation and includes additional provisions to create more housing, reduce barriers to production, and set affordable housing production goals. Building on Governor Baker's goal of producing 135,000 units by 2025, the bill increases that goal (427,000 by 2040) and sets an affordable housing goal for 20% of that new housing to be affordable, with 10% dedicated to Extremely Low-Income households. Lastly, the bill gives a court power to require abutters to post a bond before challenging a new development. This legislation includes:

- Multifamily zoning requirement for cities and towns served by public transit. Also filed as a separate bill - H.1231, sponsored by Rep. Christine Barber
- Abutter appeals reform to discourage frivolous lawsuits to stop development. Also filed as a separate bill - H.3397 & S.903, sponsored by Rep. Joseph McGonagle & Sen. Julian Cyr.
- Setting a statewide affordable housing production goal. Also filed as a separate bill – H.1318, sponsored by Rep. Dave Rogers

### **7. (H.1305 & S.797) Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)**

Sponsors: REP. ADRIAN MADARO & SEN. JAMIE ELDRIDGE

Legislation would codify and make programmatic improvements to the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), including raising the fair market rent standard for rental vouchers, increasing administrative fees, requiring inspections, and improving data collection.

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### ***Visibility***

The *Visibility* work group consisted of five Commissioners – Joan Freedman, Tina Games, Laura Innis, Tara Wallace, Natalia Frois, and Helen Bresnahan (emerita) – who spent the year following up on various opportunities that related to keeping the work of the Commission in the public eye.

An introductory letter was written and sent to all state legislators, accompanying the November Public Hearing report. Media releases were also sent prior to the hearing, resulting in two interviews - one with Cape Cod Media (on camera) and the other for Cape Cod Times. The work group also provided a broad distribution of the hearing flyer.

In addition to promoting the public hearing, the *Visibility* work group maintained the CCICSW Facebook page, posting articles and updates that pertained to the work of our Commission. Two other social media platforms were explored, Instagram and Twitter - with a goal of launching CCICSW pages during the latter half of 2020. The workgroup also researched the status of the currently defunct CCICSW website with the intention to update it later in the year.

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### ***Hearing More Voices/Reaching More Women***

The *Hearing More Voices* working group consisted of six Commissioners – Lisa McNeill, Lisa Malcolm, Katia Dacunha, Tracy Johnson, Natalia Frois, and Melissa Murphy.

The role of the *Hearing More Voices/Reaching More Women* working group is to plan and implement programs, as outlined in the CCICSW Action Plan, which will allow CCICSW to meet more women and to hear and record their challenges, needs, and thoughts in order to support our mission of being a permanent and effective voice for women on Cape Cod and the Islands. Currently, this includes planning and holding Public Hearings and regional Listening Circles, working with the Visibility WG to promote the events, and reporting on the events.

The Hearing More Voices/Reaching More Women Working Group of CCICSW planned and held a Public Hearing in early November 2019 (report attached). The Working Group was also intending to hold a targeted Listening Circle in Fall 2019 but was required to take a break during the summer due to internal Commission workings. The Working Group and the full Commission agreed that it was best to focus on the Public Hearing rather than spread resources thin.

In late 2019, we started planning for a Listening Circle to be held on Nantucket in Spring 2020, and we were pleased to be working with one of our former Commissioners from Nantucket, Melissa Murphy, on the planning. Unfortunately, the current COVID-19 situation required us to cancel our May 2nd Listening Circle. We intend to hold the Listening Circle on Nantucket in the fall of 2020. In the meantime, we are looking at other virtual options for holding an online discussion and/or updating our previous CCICSW survey in order to hear from more women during this critical time.

## **EASTERN REGIONAL**

### **Commissioners:**

Margaret Adams, Dedham, Chair  
Kerry Akashian, North End, Vice-Chair  
Mona M. Thompson, Canton, Treasurer  
Amanda Crabb, Quincy  
Michelle Lanteigne, Quincy  
Jamica Nadina Love, Mattapan  
Tamisha Lucien Civil, Boston  
Toby Kamens Rodman, Brookline  
Soumia Aitelhaj, Revere

Eastern Regional Commission on the Status of Women includes the towns of Avon, Brookline, Canton, Cohasset, Dedham, Foxborough, Holbrook, Milton, Plainville, Randolph, Sharon, Stoughton, and Westwood, and the cities of Boston, Braintree, Chelsea, Quincy, Revere, Weymouth, and Winthrop.

**Meetings:** The Commission held 7 meetings on September 5, November 7, January 9, February 6, May 7, April 2, and June 4. The October meeting did not have a quorum.

At a retreat in June of 2019, the ERCSW outlined a goal to develop outreach efforts and specific actions it planned to help meet this goal:

### **Goal: Empower women and girls through the creation of connections to community leaders and organizations.**

- Outreach to organizations and community leaders in the region.
- Commissioners send the letters to organizations in the region.
- Partner with organizations and community leaders focused on issues faced by women and girls.
- Create a resource guide for the region including community leaders.
- Create and administer a survey to collect information from women and girls in the region.
- Build an email list to communicate with partners.
- Promote social media accounts.
- Seek out an intern to support the goals of the Commission.
- Send letters to the editor to introduce the Commission.

At this retreat, the ERCSW developed and reviewed procedures for its meetings that have been supportive in maintaining momentum of the Commission.

The ERCSW drafted a letter that they then targeted to specific organizations in the region. The Commission drafted a survey in the winter of 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic decided to wait on its administration until the fall of 2020 in order to not coincide with some of the efforts of the statewide commission. We made a connection to Healthworks Community Fitness in Dorchester and also were able to



identify their space as a meeting location. One commissioner met with the Women's Foundation in Boston and learned more about how they support women in the region. Every two months they have an info session. The commission plans to attend one of these sessions to learn more about their work in the fall. Commissioner Mona Thompson met with the principal of the middle school and one of the elementary schools in Canton Public Schools. They were interested in collaborating with the ERCSW and encouraging young girls to participate in the MCSW hearings.

The ERCSW developed a survey to help gather information from women and girls in the region. Commissioners hoped to administer the survey this spring to then be able to report the results to the MCSW. Unfortunately with COVID-19, the group decided not to administer the survey at this time and to instead wait until next fall. The MCSW also was administering a survey to obtain information on the impact of COVID-19 on women at the same time. Commissioners instead worked to promote that survey.

The ERCSW hoped to hold an event in the spring of 2020. However, planning for the event was postponed due to COVID-19 and the state's closure. The group hoped to show the documentary Pushout, which spotlights the criminalization of Black girls in schools. The ERCSW also committed to reading the book "Push Out: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools" and holding some discussion on the text.

ERCSW commissioners joined efforts with the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women and Girls to support a regional meeting with women in the region to share the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on women. Commissioners learned that women were struggling with food insecurity, health care, mental health, and safety for food workers. Women indicated that they desired advocacy for the passage of legislation to improve access to menstrual products. In addition, commissioners joined to support three different hearings focused on hearing the voices of girls in May of 2020. Commissioners heard from young women about disparities in the resources provided by different school districts. These disparities ranged from participation requirements, instructor availability, technology availability, and how they felt the school district and their teachers supported them. Young girls indicated they enjoyed the opportunity to come together virtually, feeling they were isolated during school closure.

The ERCSW also began drafting a resource guide for the region. The effort would outline in one place key resources specific to the needs of women and girls in areas including immigration, health, mental health, domestic violence, and food insecurity. The hope is to continue to complete this work over the summer and publish it in the fall.

In addition, the Commission continued to update its Facebook page and Twitter account. Both accounts have content shared on these media. The ERCSW committed to create more posts going into the summer to bring more visibility to the Commission.

**Advocacy:** The group also advocated for S.408/H.639, An Act Supporting Working Parents who Choose To Run for Public Office. Some commissioners reached out to their senators and representatives by providing information on a bi-partisan basis and participated in meetings by the MCSW. Commissioners also advocated for An Act to Increase Access to Disposable Menstrual Products in Prisons, Homeless Shelters, and Public Schools, S.1274/H.1959, and shared information via social media.

**Conclusions:** During the 2020-2021 year, the Eastern Regional Commission on the Status of Women and Girls focused on its continued organization of the commission. The ERCSW welcomed three new members during the year. The ERCSW was able to have more consistent meeting locations that were accessible to members and to maintain a quorum at all of these meetings. The ERCSW is excited to begin its third year as a commission by striving for opportunities that allow it to hear from women and girls in our region.

Respectfully submitted by Margaret Adams, Co-Chair of Eastern Regional Commission on the Status of Women and Girls



Annual Report  
2020

Commissioners

Paula Gomez Stordy, Chair (Middleton); Marianela Rivera, Vice Chair (Lawrence); Ogor Winnie Okoye, Secretary (Saugus); Geetha Rao Ramani, Commissioner (Andover); Sefatia Romeo Theken, Commissioner (Gloucester); Michaela Dunn, Commissioner (Amesbury); Sandy Almonte, commissioner (Methuen).

Mission

On August 3, 2010, former Governor Deval Patrick signed legislation establishing the Essex County Commission on the Status of Women (ECCSW) to advance the women of Essex County to full equality in all areas of life and to promote women's rights and responsibilities. The Essex County Commission on the Status of Women was formed in 2010 with a mission to study, review, and report on the status of women in Essex County, and to provide a permanent, effective voice to advance the status of these women to full equality of all areas of life.

The goal of Essex County Commission on the Status of Women to uplift the voices of diverse women of Essex County and advocate for the health, safety, well-being, and economic advancement of women through community outreach, legislative advocacy, community hearings, and community education. We value equity, inclusion, and the leadership of women in all areas that impact their lives.

Advocacy

*Which issues were brought up in public hearings? Which issues did the commission identify as the most important, and what did the commission do to address those issues? What state-wide legislation, if any, did the commission endorse and how does it fit into the commission's priorities?*

This year, the commission's legislative priorities included sexual harassment training in the workplace, supporting working parents running for public office, and An Act Relative to Healthy Youth to promote healthy relationships and sexuality education within public schools. We also planned to host a panel of Essex County women who have run for public office to be hosted at Northern Essex Community College in Lawrence, MA during the month of April. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to cancel all in-person meetings and events and the panel did not take place. The commission continued to meet via Zoom video conferencing. Mandatory social distancing state orders were in place to minimize exposure to the virus, resulting in the unintended consequence of increased isolation and decreased support to victims of domestic violence who were quarantined with their abusive partner. The commission decided to respond by increasing awareness of domestic violence services available to victims of domestic violence living in Essex County.

Programming

The Regional Commission implemented the following programming in fiscal year 2020:

In response to the increased isolation that victims of domestic violence experienced during the COVID-19 state-ordered quarantine mandates, the commission organized programming to increase the community's awareness of free and confidential domestic violence services within Essex County. We hosted a virtual panel, "Navigating the Scourge of Domestic Violence During COVID-19". The panel featured leadership of domestic violence programs within Essex County including fellow Essex County commissioner, Director of Lawrence Police Community Relations, and founder of the domestic violence program Delamano Sandy Almonte; Executive Director of Healing Abuse Working for Change, Sara Stanley; Executive Director of The Jeannie Geiger Crisis Center, Suzanne Dubus, of the YWCA Northern Massachusetts; and the Director of Community Based Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence Program Operations, Arelis Huerta.

Addressing domestic violence aligns with the commission's priorities and values, as domestic violence impacts the safety, health, economic stability, and advancement of women who are survivors of domestic violence and their children, who are also impacted by witnessing and experiencing abuse in the home. The virtual panel was a live streamed event via Facebook on Thursday, May 28<sup>th</sup>. Panelists described the dynamics of domestic violence, the impact of abuse, how to help a friend, and all available services their organizations offer. Individuals engaged by asking questions of the panelist. This was a successful event that reached more people we could have ever reached in person. To date, the video of this virtual panel has reached 3,122 people and has received 835 engagements. Because social media has a wide reach outside of Essex County, we followed up by posting statewide and national domestic violence hotlines. We did receive feedback inquiring if we could host this event in Spanish. We hope to schedule a panel discussion with the bilingual panelist soon.

#### Goals for the next fiscal year

*How does it build on the work already being done? What steps are necessary to achieve it and what resources (time, money, space) will it require? How will you know when you have achieved it?*

*Goal 1.* Our first goal is to increase the membership of commissioners. Currently, we have seven commissioners and are looking to recruit three more. This will require coordinating with the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women to receive applications of prospective commissioners and onboarding them.

*Goal 2.* Our second goal is to recruit volunteers and/or interns from local colleges who can assist in with administrative support and social media management of our Facebook and Instagram accounts. This will require identifying contacts within schools who oversee volunteer and internship opportunities in the local colleges and providing them with language to promote this opportunity. We will also post on our social media outlets. This will not require funding and will support the commission's outreach to the community to provide information impacting women's lives.

*Goal 3.* Our third goal is to host another virtual event to provide the community with information that will enhance the safety, health, and economic advancement of women residents of Essex County. We would like to highlight the impact that institutionalized racism and other forms of oppression have in the lives of Essex County women and efforts to undo racism and oppression. We hope panelists can volunteer their time so that this event does not require funds.

Submitted by Paula Gomez Stordy on July 16, 2020.

## HAMPDEN COUNTY

### Members:

Dawn Forbes DiStefano — West Springfield  
Michelle Goncalves — Ludlow  
Patricia Hallberg — Wilbraham  
Gabrielle Jackson — Springfield  
Tara Marshall — Feeding Hills  
Jennifer Metsch — Longmeadow  
Lizzy Ortiz — Springfield  
Shanique Spaulding — Springfield

### Elected Officers:

Dawn Forbes DiStefano — Chair  
Patricia Hallberg — Vice Chair  
Michelle Goncalves — Secretary

### **Purpose**

On April 25, 2017, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women inaugurated nine (9) new commissioners to a newly-formed regional commission created to study and report on the status of women and girls in the 23 towns and cities that make up Hampden County, Massachusetts. “The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women is a state-established body charged with reviewing the status of women in Massachusetts and offering recommendations regarding policy that would improve access to opportunities and equality.” The unfunded Regional Commissions “were legislatively created to study and report on the status of women and girls in their geographical areas, and to provide permanent and effective voices for women and girls. Each county and regional commission reports their findings annually to MCSW.”

### **Membership**

At the July 11, 2019 meeting, the Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls (HCCSWG) voted for three (3) elected officers at which time the following assignments were accepted – Dawn Forbes DiStefano, Chair (2<sup>nd</sup> term); Patricia Hallberg, Vice Chair (1<sup>st</sup> term); Michelle Goncalves (2<sup>nd</sup> term). HCCSWG Commissioners Nicole Murray, Ellen Moorhouse, and Mary Beth Ogulewicz issued resignations in May, June, and September 2019 respectively. HCCSWG Commissioner Shaitia Spruell provided her resignation in October 2019 in order to accept an appointment to the MCSW. In January 2020, the HCCSWG welcomed the following new Commissioners – Gabrielle Jackson, Tara Marshall, Barbara McKenzie, and Lizzy Ortiz. Unfortunately, Barbara McKenzie issued her resignation prior to her swearing in due to illness. Since June 2019, HCCSWG Commissioners have engaged in eight (8) public meetings and worked with the MCSW to support a Western Massachusetts public hearing in Springfield in February 2020. HCCSWG Commissioners have worked closely with the MCSW by participating in Regional Convenings, Advocacy Days, and several virtual informational sessions.

### **Accomplishments**

The HCCSWG engaged in a wide variety of community learning events, as well as advocacy efforts on behalf of women and girls. To make ourselves more accessible to constituents, we implemented a series of standing

meeting locations across the county (Palmer, Westfield, Holyoke, and Springfield). Our Commission also continued to have a vibrant and dynamic social media presence, offering daily Facebook posts and updates about issues impacting women and girls. In addition, the social media posts supported events specifically focused on women and girls, leading to increased awareness of the Commission and followers. In April 2020, the HCCSWG officially voted on a Social Media Policy. In addition, the Commission continued to identify local efforts in research, policy, and legislation, reflecting information and needs shared by constituents.

- Investing in Girls Alliance (IGA) – The HCCSWG has initiated efforts to replicate the Worcester-based Investing in Girls Alliance for the Hampden County area. Mary McRae was a guest speaker at the September and October 2019 HCCSWG public meetings, sharing the history, expertise, and successes of the IGA. The HCCSWG believes it has a role in serving as a catalyst and convener of agencies focused on girls’ needs in our area. Similar to IGA, HCCSWG is working to bring agencies together to collaborate to collect data, advocate for policy change, and provide community training – all leading to improved conditions for girls.
- Legislative Advocacy – HCCSWG Commissioners took an active role in advocating for and supporting legislation aligned with the MCSW agenda. In particular, Commissioners communicated and worked to support efforts for the Healthy Youth Act, Affordable Childcare Bill, and Sexual Harassment and Education Legislation.
- 413Cares – HCCSWG Commissioners supported the regional implementation of the 413Cares website by serving on the local advisory board and recruiting local agencies to participate. The 413Cares website serves as a platform for services and resources needed to address basic needs crises (food, shelter, clothing), behavior and mental health services, housing, childcare, and employment supports.
- Women @ Work – HCCSWG Commissioners supported the newly formed Women @ Work working group. This group focuses on supporting local events geared towards raising funds and awareness to improve the lives of women.
- Women’s Fund of Western Massachusetts – HCCSWG Commissioners participated on the Advisory Committee working to complete the Status of Women and Girls Report 2019. In November 2019, HCCSWG hosted a public meeting for a community listening event related to the report.
- 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) – HCCSWG Commissioners assisted in the research and dissemination of the 2019 CHNA with specific focus on areas related to women and girls, including maternal/child health, preventative care, chronic disease, and domestic violence.
- Coffee Hours with Commissioners – To further engage with Hampden County residents and raise awareness about the Commission’s work, HCCSWG initiated a series of online coffee hour listening sessions this year. Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when physical interaction was limited, these sessions allowed HCCSWG to advocate for Hampden County women and girls, collect feedback from residents, and help promote activities and initiatives that support our community.
- Hampden County COVID-19 Survey – HCCSWG created and distributed a survey designed to gather information about the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls in Hampden County. Survey results should be available next fiscal year.

#### **Local Committees and Advisory Board Memberships (HCCSWG Commissioner Representation)**

- Businesses Against Human Trafficking
- Dress for Success of Western Massachusetts



## **HAMPSHIRE-FRANKLIN**

### Executive Board

Bonnie MacCracken, Chair  
Linda-Jeanne Mack, Vice Chair  
Francia Wisnewski, Treasurer  
Wendy Dagle, Clerk

### Commissioners

Denise Brown  
Ginetta E.B. Candelario  
Marcia Plant Jackson

### Past Members

Marianne Bullock  
Chelsea Kline  
Keleigh Pereira

## **Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls Annual Report (2019-2020)**

**“It always feels nice to be associated with a team you share a great bond with.” (Anushka Shetty)**

Over the course of the 2019-2020 year, the Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls (HFCSWG) continued to work within their district, expanding the public discussion of gender-based inequality in Western Massachusetts. During the year, HFCSWG continued meeting with local legislators and their staff to discuss the issues that impacted the women and girls in their district, as well as the Massachusetts State Commission’s legislative priorities. This Annual Report (covering the period of July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020) highlights many of the accomplishments that were made.

### **Mission**

The purpose of the Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls (HFCSWG) shall be to advance women and girls toward full equity in all areas of life and to promote the rights and opportunities for all women and girls. The mission of the Commission on the Status of Women and Girls is to amplify the voices of women and girls (being all those who self-identify as such, regardless of the gender they were designated at birth) across Hampshire-Franklin Counties in a way that facilitates and fosters community, inclusiveness, and well-being for women and girls. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the full enjoyment of life for all women and girls across all lifespans.

### **Goals for 2020-2021**

The goals we set for ourselves each year are defined by our mission statement. We continually strive and set goals to amplify the voices of women and girls in our district. HFCSWG will discuss and set goals for the upcoming 2020-2021 fiscal year during the annual retreat scheduled for August. During the retreat, the commissioners will define their goals, examine their structure, plan advocacy events, and schedule meetings for the next twelve months, including a celebration for International Women’s Day. We are looking forward to:

1. Electing officers.



2. Recruiting a full slate of commissioners and planning for ongoing attrition as the terms of the inaugural class of commissioners come to an end.
3. Reviewing our bylaws.
4. Determining ways to continually create a sense of culture and ways for promoting the rights and opportunities for all women and girls amid this period of social/physical distancing.

### **From the Chair:**

The Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls is a catalyst for positive change through advocacy, education, and collaboration. We represent a diverse geographic region in Western Massachusetts: our district comprises 46 municipalities.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that we have about 161,000 people residing in Hampshire County and 70,000 residents residing in Franklin County. My sister commissioners, and the women and girls residing in this district, represent 53.3% of the population in Hampshire County and 51.5% of the population in Franklin County. Women represent the majority, yet we continued to struggle to achieve full equity in all areas of our lives.

Franklin County is the poorest county in Massachusetts. The public transportation system in the HFCSWG district is limited. Buses do not extend into our hilltown regions or western portions of these two counties, and Ware is not connected to Amherst, nor New Salem to Orange, by public transportation.

Lack of public transportation hinders our access to food, childcare, housing, jobs, and medical care. Women in Franklin County are being stifled by a twofold blow: they have limited public transportation, and many rural communities lack high-speed internet service. This lack of services and resources are setting Franklin County, and portions of Hampshire County, up to fall further behind, causing the wage and equity gap to grow wider.

When asked to highlight issues affecting women and girls in the HFCSWG district, during the recent Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women Semi-Annual Regional Convening held in Worcester, I spoke about the lack of high-speed internet in our district. Many were astonished to hear that this was even an issue and that it was affecting women and girls living only a short drive from where they were sitting. The lack of internet in our region is creating a larger pay gap by blocking women and girls from furthering their education and applying for jobs. The lack of internet is also affecting HFCSWG's ability to facilitate and foster community, inclusiveness, and well-being for women and girls throughout our entire region.

During HFCSWG's community conversation on domestic violence with the local domestic violence advocacy organization Safe Passage, we learned how vitally important it was for domestic violence victims living in rural areas to have access to online resources. Online resources also include accessing medical and mental healthcare providers. Commissioner Jackson, a Nurse Practitioner at the Hilltown Health Centers, also talked about how medical professionals are now practicing more telemedicine, yet a large proportion of her patients in the hilltowns do not have access to the internet. Also, Commissioner Mack, who is a Clinical Social Worker, reports that many children and families are unable to receive telehealth therapy services throughout the area because they lack access to affordable and reliable internet services. This affects the well-being of their

patients and the communities they serve, and this issue weighs heavily on both Commissioner Jackson and Mack.

As we retreated into quarantine, the lack of broadband service in this district, nonexistent for many, has created a digital divide, causing our young girls to fall educationally behind their peers in urban areas. Recently, the Recorder, a daily newspaper covering Franklin County, ran an article about how Franklin County residents are struggling without broadband. The reporter wrote about how people (adults and children) are working from their cars parked in municipal parking lots because broadband service in many rural areas is limited only to municipal buildings. With libraries, schools, and community workspaces shuttered, parking lots have become the only option for people to telework, for children to communicate with their teachers, for teachers to teach, and for individuals to file unemployment benefits.

With the growing unemployment and slowing economy, I fear that many households are also choosing between paying for the internet or paying for groceries, widening the educational and equity gap further in our district. We are concerned that we will never be able to close this gap without MCSW and our legislators prioritizing this as a women's issue. This needs to be addressed immediately; will you take this issue on and bring high-speed internet to our district?

Now I would like to introduce you to the team, the HFCSWG Commissioners, the women I share a great bond with. In each of our biographical introductions, attached to this annual report, we tell her story, including events we participated in and our accomplishments as HFCSWG Commissioners.

Be well, be safe.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Bonnie MacCracken, Chair  
Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls  
June 8, 2020

## **Meet the HFCSWG Commissioners**

### **Denise Brown, M.S., CIM., Commissioner**

Denise Brown, B.S., MS., CIM, PhD student (Capella University), native of Holyoke, MA, graduated from Bay Path University One-Day-A-Week Program with a B.S. in Business Administration with a concentration in Executive Management and a M.S. in Communication and Information Management. She is currently on her journey of pursuing her terminal degree from Capella University in Higher Education-Leadership and is currently enrolled at Bay Path University's Online Teaching Certificate Program.

Denise was most recently appointed and sworn in to serve a second three-year term to serve as Commissioner for the Status of Women and Girls in Hampshire-Franklin County. Denise currently serves as adjunct professor at Springfield College and teaches in several disciplines. She served as the content developer to the African American history course and professor.

Her work in the Hampshire-Franklin county commission includes serving as the co-chair to the Sojourner Truth's legacy for fighting for Women's Suffrage is honored and lifted as part of the pathway to ensure ALL people especially Women of Color have protected access to the VOTE and the significant role in our democracy." Denise remains a facilitator for Salary Negotiation Workshops for Women in the Hampshire-Franklin County for the AAUW Work Smart initiative. She most recently joined a partnership with Coppedge Consulting Company, where she will serve as the primary Cultural Humility Consultant to Hampshire-Franklin County.

Denise is a forward thinker who is compassionate and passionate. She is committed to Social Justice and Equality for Women and Girls of Color, in particular for African-American Women and Girls. Part of her doctoral research is focused on improving policies and practices associated with juvenile justice and educational and socioeconomic conditions for Black girls, women, and their families.

### **Wendy Dagle, Clerk, Hampshire County**

Wendy lives in South Hadley, Massachusetts. Wendy has a Master's degree in Public Policy & Administration from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her professional work has revolved around Massachusetts foster care, and she has worked as the Director for Placement Services at Multicultural Community Services in Springfield for the last 5 years. She also serves on the Board of the Massachusetts Council on Adult Foster Care, providing professional leadership, knowledge, and legislative advocacy to provider agencies across the state.

Wendy has been with the Commission for just under a year and is currently serving as the Clerk and on the communications committee. Wendy actively attends monthly meetings and this year participated in this commission's annual retreat, the Pioneer Valley Women's Day March in Springfield, and meetings with a few of Western Massachusetts' heroines and Senator Joe Commerford, Attorney Tahirah Amatul-Wadud and Ammy Cronin (Safe Passage). Most recently, she designed a pamphlet for the Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls. After a lot of learning, Wendy is excited to become a more active and visible Commissioner in the next coming year.

### **Ginetta E.B. Candelario, Commissioner, Hampshire County**

Ginetta Candelario is Professor of Sociology, Latin American & Latina/o Studies and the Study of Women & Gender at Smith College. She has also been engaged in Community Based Learning and Research with Holyoke non-profit organizations since 2009.

In addition to being Editor of the scholarly journal *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*, housed at Smith and published by Duke University Press, she is author of *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Identity From Museums to Beauty Shops* (Duke University Press in 2007), which received awards from the Latino Studies Section of the Latin American Studies Association and the New England Council of Latin American Studies. Her edited volume, *Miradas desencadenantes: Los estudios de género en la República Dominicana al inicio del tercer milenio*, the first collection of gender and women's studies research in the Dominican Republic, was published in April of 2005 by FLACSO and INTEC. She also co-edited a two-volume primary documents collection for the Dominican Republic's Archivo General de la Nación, *Cien Años de feminismo dominicanos, 1861-1961*, published in 2016. Her current book project is tentatively titled *Voices Echoing*

*Beyond the Seas: Dominican Feminisms from Transatlantic to Transnational, 1882-1942.*

Finally, Ginetta is married to Timothy J. Seney and the proud mother of two adult children, Marlena (who is part of the Teach for America Corps in North Carolina) and Christian Candelario Romero (who will be continuing his college education in Massachusetts).

**Marcia Plant Jackson, MSN, MPA, RN, FNP-C, Franklin County**

Marcia moved to Leverett in the Pioneer Valley 5 years ago. She has been a nurse and Nurse Practitioner for more than 30 years. Her professional life has been dedicated to working with the underserved, the uninsured, and the disenfranchised. She founded a transition program for people with mental illness who were being released from hospitals with little programming to follow them. She started a neighborhood clinic in an inner-city high school in Indianapolis for people with no insurance, where she remained for eleven years. She works as a Nurse Practitioner at both the Community Health Center of Franklin County and the Hilltown Health Center.

She is an inaugural member of this commission. She has focused her attention on access to healthcare issues and is a Member of Western Mass Medicare for All. She attends many of their meetings, representing the commission. She has attended office hours with Reps. Sabadosa and Blais and forums chaired by Sen. Comerford. She has attended Advocacy Day in Boston and a Voting Rights event in Greenfield. She marched in the Pride parade in Northampton. Through her affiliation with the health center in Greenfield, she has hosted many of the Commission meetings.

Marcia published an opinion piece in the Hampshire Gazette on May 26, 2020 in response to a column by a local physician who downplayed the Covid-19 pandemic by comparing it to the seasonal flu, as he discussed numbers and percentages. In her piece 'The Human Experience Behind Covid,' Marcia portrayed the human face and cost of the disease.

**Bonnie MacCracken, Chair, Hampshire County**

Bonnie, an inaugural member of the Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls (HFCSWG), brings to the commission her entrepreneurship and organizational leadership skills. Her organizational leadership skills were honed during her own campaigns, assisting other political candidates, and while attending the Women's Campaign School at Yale and the Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts Leadership Institute for Political and Public Impact (LIPPI).

She has dedicated over 12 years to public service and leadership on issues of housing insecurity and on community nonprofit boards. She works pro bono with Massachusetts Alliance Against Predatory Lending assisting foreclosed homeowners, drafting policy, and reviewing foreclosure documents. In 2012, she drafted and successfully lobbied for an amendment to the Massachusetts Homestead Act to protect deployed Massachusetts servicemembers from the foreclosure of their homes. This amendment passed under the Valor Act of 2012.

Bonnie has served on the executive committee of the HFCSWG for three years, serving one term as treasurer and two as chair. As Chair, her goals were to increase visibility and programming. This past November, she spoke about the history and mission of the HFCSWG before the membership of the

Petersham Unitarian Church.

She worked with the Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts to coordinate a co-hosted community listening session to present the *Key Findings on the Status of Women and Girls in Western Mass in 2019*. During the year, Bonnie also coordinated a community conversation on domestic violence with Safe Passage, as well as monthly commission meetings. She joined Commissioner Mack at the Ware domestic violence awareness walk and walked with Commissioner Dagle at the Pioneer Valley Women's March.

Bonnie recently closed her thirty-year land title research firm and began a new career working in the Realty Management Division of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She resides in Amherst with her family.

**Linda-Jeanne M. Mack, LICSW, Vice Chair, Hampshire County**

Linda-Jeanne is a resident of Easthampton and an inaugural member of the Hampshire Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls and was appointed in 2017. She served her first year as Clerk and then has served as the Vice-Chair since July of 2019. During this past year, Linda-Jeanne has been active in a variety of community activities on behalf of the commission. Some highlights for her this year include the Ware Domestic Violence Awareness Walk and the Western Mass Women's Fund Forum event, where the Commission shared the results of the Women's Fund Status of Women and Girls report for which Linda-Jeanne was on the advisory board in Spring of 2019. Most recently, she moderated a Girls Initiative "What's Your Status" session for the state commission.

In addition to her community activism with the Commission, Linda-Jeanne serves on several advisory boards and task forces regarding child welfare, violence against women, and other human rights causes. Throughout the COVID-19 stay at home order, she has proudly volunteered weekly in Hampshire County at the Not Bread Alone community meal kitchen in Amherst.

By day, Linda-Jeanne is the Director of the Adoption Services program at 18 Degrees, which serves children and families involved with the foster care system in Massachusetts. Her program works to ensure children can go home safely to their family of origin and looks to provide other options for permanent adoptive homes if that can't happen. As a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker, Linda-Jeanne sees a small caseload of clients for therapy at one of the community mental health clinics in Northampton. She also teaches multiple courses for the Social Work department at Western New England University.

**Francia Wisnewski, Treasurer, Franklin County**

Francia is an immigrant who grew up in Cali, Colombia and a twenty-year resident of Franklin County. Francia holds a Bachelor's Degree in teaching sciences from Universidad Del Valle in Cali, Colombia and a Master's degree in Education from the University of Massachusetts.

She has been a tireless advocate for children, families, women, and individuals. She works as an Associate Director of Programs for Raising A Reader MA in the Pioneer Valley, focusing her work on supporting school readiness success. She has worked for local nonprofit anti-poverty organizations throughout the years, and she continues to volunteer her services in various community initiatives, specifically amplifying the voices of women and girls.

Francia is serving in her second term and was our first Chair who supported the establishment of our regional commission. During her tenure as chair, she led the process of writing our bylaws and supervised and collaborated with our first intern, producing our first resource guide to identify organizations in the region that supports women and girls. With her ability to network and skills to be a connector, she has participated in legislative breakfasts and local chamber of commerce breakfasts and represented the commission as a speaker during two consecutive Advocacy Days sponsored by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW).

In November of 2019, Commissioner Wisnewski was nominated by both her Representative and her Senator as one of local advocates with the Latin X Excellence on the Hill. This award was presented at the State House, supported by Speaker DeLeo and Senator Spilka. The event was sponsored by the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus and recognized local leadership of Black and Latinx individuals to further better policies in the Commonwealth.

Francia carries other critical leadership positions; our current Treasurer is representing the community as an elected town meeting member and Montague Finance Committee Member. She also serves on the boards of the SHEA Theater and Leadership Pioneer Valley. Before moving to Montague, she served two terms on the City Greenfield's School Committee, including two terms as Vice-Chair.

## **METRO WEST**

**Mission:** Our goal as a Commission, beyond our mission statement as defined in our bylaws, is to strengthen our ability to advocate on behalf of MetroWest women. We seek to do this by listening, learning, and informing ourselves about the issues that matter to the majority of women in our region; determining effective outreach strategies; and developing a robust list of stakeholders. These efforts are intended to improve our ability to play a role in the support and advancement of women and the promotion of their rights and opportunities.

### **Commissioners**

Nancy Rosenblum (Ashland, MA), Patricia Hohl (Framingham, MA), Cathy Ashton (Wayland, MA), Margareth Shepard (Framingham, MA), Ceylan Rowe (Northborough, MA), Jean Bertschmann (Hopkinton, MA), Stephanie Deeley (Framingham, MA), Heather Panahi (Wellesley, MA), Sonia Sharma (Southborough, MA)

**Student Interns:** Samiha Rao (Franklin, MA) and Brooke Bossert (Needham, MA)

### **Officers Elected for 2019**

Heather Panahi, Chair  
Nancy Rosenblum, Vice-Chair  
Stephanie Deeley, Vice-Chair  
Jean Bertschmann, Secretary  
Ceylan Rowe, Legislative Committee Head

### **Outgoing Members**

Margareth Shepard  
Sonia Sharma  
Patricia Hohl

### **New Members**

Lindsey Galvao  
Leslie Smart  
Rachel Niemiec

## **Overview/Summary of MWCSW Actions/Priorities**

This year, the MetroWest Commission on the Status of Women continued to actively work to improve and increase its visibility in order to better represent women and girls in the region. Moreover, we wanted to be more engaged in bringing awareness to some of the issues and pending legislation we and our constituents care most deeply about. To these ends, the commission hosted and/or participated in several local events this year:

**Reproductive Justice Hearings:** On November 6, 2019 and February 25, 2020 the MWCSW hosted two public hearings—the first was co-hosted by Senator Becca Rausch in Needham at the Needham Town Hall, and the second, co-hosted with Representatives Maria Robinson, Jack Lewis, and Carmine Gentile, was held in Framingham, MA at the Main Branch of the Framingham Public Library. Both events were open to the public and were focused on highlighting many of the reproductive justice-related issues that those who identify as women will face from adolescence to adulthood.

Each of the forums included a panel of community experts and activists with particular interest/focus. The panelists included:

- **Brandon Adams**, FSU Student and board member of the Department of Education's Safe and Supportive Schools Commission
- **Mehreen Butt**, Assoc. Director of Policy and Government Affairs for Planned Parenthood
- **Kim Comatas**, Lead Teacher at Partners in Sex Education
- **Lisa MacDonald**, Director of Equity Compliance and Title IX Coordinator/Affirmative Action Officer at MassBay Community College
- **Kate Sanetra-Butler**, Founder and Executive Director of Dignity Matters

In addition to the panelists, community organizations and women's support services were invited to host information tables and provide informational materials for attendees, both prior to and following the panel discussion. Some of the groups who participated included: The League of Women's Voters (Framingham and Needham), REACH, Dignity Matters, Planned Parenthood, Women's Suffrage Centennial Celebration, representatives from the ROE Act Coalition, Voices Against Violence, RIA House and others.

The forums were widely publicized throughout the MetroWest area via print and social media. Both of the forums began with brief remarks by Commission Chair, Heather Panahi. In Framingham, Mayor Yvonne Spicer and Jack Lewis also offered remarks. At the Needham forum, Senator Rausch moderated, while Representative Maria Robinson moderated the Framingham event, with Representative Gentile offering closing remarks.

Both of the forums sought to advocate for the support and passage of several key pieces of legislation that have been high on our commission's priority list for some time:

- An Act Relative to Healthy Youth, S.263/H.410
- An Act to Increase Access to Disposable Menstrual Products in Prisons, Homeless Shelters, and Public Schools, S.1274/H.1959
- An Act Relative to Sexual Violence on Higher Education Campuses, S.764/H.1209
- An Act Requiring Sexual Misconduct Climate Surveys at Institutions of Higher Education, S.736/H.1208
- An Act Advancing the Health of Pregnant Persons, S.1335
- An Act to Remove Obstacles and Expand Abortion Access, S.1209/H.3320 (ROE ACT)

Participants were encouraged to fill out legislative alert postcards, provided by the MWCSW, which were subsequently mailed to the appropriate legislators after the events.

**Virtual Panel Discussion:** Following Women's Advocacy Day, hosted by the State Commission, the MetroWest Commission on the Status of Women hosted a virtual panel discussion on May 20, 2020, to continue the discussion about how COVID-19 is impacting women's support services and the populations they serve. Featured panelists included:

- Maureen Belger of *Dignity Matters*
- Colin Gallant, Health Center Manager for the *Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts (PPLM) Health Center* in Marlborough
- Patricia Hohl, Director at *Voices Against Violence* in Framingham and State Commissioner
- Marcy Ostrow, Intake Hotline Coordinator and Board Secretary for the *Jane Fund*
- Lucia Panichella is the Senior Director of Programs and Partnerships at *Jewish Family Service of Metrowest (JFS of Metrowest)*



The panel discussion had 30 participants in total, and resources were shared electronically. Questions that were explored that evening included:

- Would each of you comment on how COVID-19 and the subsequent ‘stay-at-home’ orders are impacting/affecting the populations that you serve?
- What obstacles are non-profit organizations like yours experiencing in the midst of this pandemic (i.e. outreach abilities, funding, access to resources, etc.)?
- Recognizing that the pandemic has put much of the pending legislation on hold, what pieces of legislation would you like to remind constituents and legislators of, and how can we support you in this?
- How can those in the MetroWest best support organizations like your own during this health crisis?

Representative Hannah Kane showed up for the event and was invited to speak. In addition, Susan Nicholls from Senate President Karen Spilka’s office was in attendance, as were State Commissioners Audrey Hall, Patricia Hohl, and Shaitia Spruell.

**Girls’ Virtual Listening Circle:** As part of a state-wide effort to help the State Commission to launch its Girls’ Initiative, the MetroWest Commission on the Status of Women hosted a virtual girls’ listening circle on May 28, 2020. The event, which was well-attended (28 girls in total), was entirely moderated by our fabulous student interns—Nicole Taylor, Rianna Mukherjee, and Deirdre Belger. The girls led an informative and productive discussion with young women aged 13-19 in an effort to better understand the obstacles and issues that young women have been facing as a result of COVID-19 and the subsequent consequences of ‘stay at home’ and social distancing measures. We are still working to compile a summary of findings, but central to the concerns of the girls who participated were issues of mental and emotional challenges and a lack of support services as a result of schools being closed. Students also mentioned that some have limited access to wifi, making digital learning difficult, and some are facing food insecurity.

**Public Testimony:** In late April 2020, concerned about the safety and physical and mental well-being of female inmates at MCI-Framingham in light of the Covid-19 outbreak, the MWCSW submitted written testimony in support of House Bill 4652: An Act Regarding Decarceration and COVID-19. Additionally, we wrote a letter to Governor Baker, calling on him to release all non-dangerous female prisoners—particularly the elderly and medically vulnerable women—who are at higher risk of COVID-19 infection. This letter was forwarded on to Senator Jamie Eldridge and Representative Claire Cronin, Chairs of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary, as well as Senate President Karen Spilka and House Speaker Robert DeLeo.

**Meetings:** The MWCSW, due to the efforts of our Co-Vice Chair, Stephanie Deeley, was able to set up a conference call with Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan to discuss our concerns about the treatment of inmates at MCI-Framingham as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Joining us on the call were also Representative Jack Lewis, Representative Maria Robinson, and Mayor Yvonne Spicer. A follow-up call was arranged with Senate President Spilka’s office as well. We are hopeful to soon speak with someone from the Department of Justice as we continue to advocate for female inmates in our region.

**Voices Against Violence Purple Passion 5K Walk:** On Saturday, September 21, 2019, members of the MWCSW Commission formed a team to walk in the annual Voices Against Violence *Purple Passion 5K Run/Walk* to raise awareness around domestic violence and sexual assault in Massachusetts. The event allowed commissioners to participate in an advocacy activity together, as well as to make connections and network with other organizations/agencies that are also committed to working on behalf of women and girls in the region.

**Partnerships/Networking:** We continue to work at growing our network of partners throughout the MetroWest region. With each event hosted, we are trying to get our name out there and offer our support to like-minded organizations. In particular, we feel confident in our growing relationships with Jewish Family Services, Dignity Matters, and Planned Parenthood. Further, we are proud of the combined work we have been able to do with Mayor Yvonne Spicer and Representatives Jack Lewis, Maria Robinson and Carmine Gentile, who have proven to be strong partners in women's advocacy.

### **Goals for 2020-21**

- To continue to boost the commission's visibility among the region's constituents and other organizations focused on improving the lives of women and girls
- To organize and facilitate at least two public hearings in the next year
- To continue to invite community leaders to our monthly meetings to hear from them directly and strengthen our relationship with their organizations
- To continue to build our social media presence
- To host a regular girls' virtual meeting space to discuss and organize around issues and to share 'tips of the trade' regarding advocacy and activism, in order to empower our young sisters.
- To continue to 'grow' our book club, perhaps opening it up to members of the MW community
- To plan and host a Legislative Breakfast for the Spring of 2021

## PLYMOUTH COUNTY

### Commissioners of the Plymouth County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

Elisabeth Arruda  
Laura Buckley  
Leona Martin  
Karis L. North  
Jordan Pouliot Latham  
Janice Johnson Plumer  
Carolyn M. Riley  
Dawn Sibor  
Kristina Whiton-O'Brien

#### Elected Officers

Karis L. North: Chair  
Carolyn M. Riley: Co-Vice-Chair  
Kristina Whiton-O'Brien: Co-Vice-Chair  
Jordan Pouliot Latham: Secretary  
Laura Buckley: Treasurer

#### Interns

Lily Cook  
Rachel Bourk

**Purpose:** The Plymouth County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls (“PCCSW”) was established by House Bill 1110, signed into law on March 15, 2018 as Chapter 45 of the Acts of 2018. The PCCSW’s mission is to provide a permanent, effective voice for the advancement of women and girls in Plymouth County.

The PCCSW is a nine-member body which represents all the towns and cities in Plymouth County, including Abington, Bridgewater, Brockton, Carver, Duxbury, East Bridgewater, Halifax, Hanover, Hanson, Hingham, Hull, Kingston, Lakeville, Marion, Marshfield, Mattapoisett, Middleborough, Norwell, Pembroke, Plymouth, Plympton, Rochester, Rockland, Scituate, Wareham, West Bridgewater, and Whitman.

The PCCSW is responsible for studying, reviewing, and reporting on the status of women and girls in Plymouth County and is charged with offering recommendations regarding policy that would improve access to opportunities and equality for women and girls in the region.

Through public hearings, public meetings, and coordination with resources within and residents of Plymouth County, the PCCSW will assess, take actions, and make recommendations to advance the women and girls of Plymouth County toward full equity in all areas of life and to promote rights and opportunities for all women and girls.

**Membership:** After approval by the legislature, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women sought applicants for the PCCSW. Eight members were appointed to the inaugural PCCSW and sworn in by

Lieutenant Governor Karen Polito on July 11, 2018. Those original eight members are Elisabeth Arruda of Marion; Laura Buckley of Plymouth; Karis North of Hull; Kathryn Pevzner of Duxbury; Jordan Pouliot Latham of Rochester; Janice Johnson Plumer of Brockton; Carolyn M. Riley of Plymouth; and Kristina Whiton-O'Brien of Kingston.

The current Commissioners are Elisabeth Arruda, Laura Buckley, Jordan Pouliot Latham, Leona Martin, Karis North, Janice Johnson Plumer, Carolyn Riley, Dawn Sibor, and Kristina Whiton-O'Brien.

Secretary Jordan Pouliot Latham resigned from the PCCSW on February 10, 2019. Her seat remains open, and a new commissioner will be appointed in the summer or fall. Elisabeth Arruda has been acting as Secretary in Jordan's absence and has our thanks for her willingness to take on that role!

**Activities and Accomplishments:** In its second year, the PCCSW focused on setting new priorities based on lessons learned from year one; restructured by adding two ad-hoc committees, legislative and events; elected officers; established the goal of two events this year, a legislative tea and a public hearing; added interns to assist the PCCSW; applied for grants to support its events; and prepared a resource guide to be shared with our constituents and supporters in Plymouth County. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted our events scheduled for this year, which will be rescheduled for the fall.

The PCCSW held its first meeting of the FY20 year on September 14, 2019, where it re-elected officers and continued a discussion about priorities for the year. It subsequently held meetings on the following dates, where it accomplished the following items (among others):

October 19, 2019 – establishing legislative and events committee, priority setting

November 16, 2019 – priority setting, discussion of interns

December 14, 2019 – priority setting, event schedule, grants, introduction of interns

January 11, 2020 – event planning

February 8, 2020 – event planning

All of the above meetings were held at the Plymouth Public Library. The PCCSW's March meeting was cancelled the day before the meeting because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of the Plymouth Public Library to the public. Thereafter, we held our meetings on Zoom on the following dates:

April 11, 2020 – regroup and discussion of MCSW survey

May 9, 2020 – a conversation with State Representative Joan Meschino, discussion about participating in virtual Advocacy day, discussion of resource guide

May 16, 2020 – discussion of legislative day and potential Girls' Initiative virtual event

June 13, 2020 – report approval, resource guide approval, initial planning for FY21

**Resource Guide:** With the assistance of two interns, Lily Cook and Rachel Bourk, the PCCSW has prepared and will shortly release (in June of 2020) its first resource guide for its constituents and supporters. Both a PDF version and an online link will be made available.

**Pilot Project – Follow-up for Domestic Violence Victims:** Commissioner Riley is working with the Hull Police Department and State Rep. Joan Meschino to develop a pilot project for victims of domestic violence in Hull, which will provide additional counseling and resources to those women.

**Hearings/Public Forums:** The PCCSW's scheduled Girls' Initiative hearing at South Shore Vo-Tech was cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope to bring this back in the fall of 2020.

The PCCSW's scheduled Legislative Tea at the Statehouse was cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope to reschedule this event once the Statehouse is reopened to the public or to hold a virtual legislative tea.

**Legislative Agenda:** The newly established Legislative Committee drafted a Legislative Agenda of bills before the MA Legislature. The list is composed of three priority bills and nine endorsed bills (see attached addendum). Over the summer, Commissioners Johnson, Martin, and Whiton-O'Brien joined MCSW members in a meeting with Representative Cronin to discuss the Act to End Child Marriage in MA.

Commissioners Carolyn Riley and Laura Buckley joined MCSW Chair Nina Kimball in a summer meeting with Senator DeMacedo. Chair Kimball presented the legislative priorities of the statewide commission. Commissioners Riley and Buckley shared the PCCSW accomplishments.

**Additional activities:** On November 21, 2019, several PCCSW Commissioners (Karis North, Carolyn Riley) joined the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women and the Eastern Regional Commission in co-sponsoring a MCSW public hearing in Weymouth, MA. The PCCSW also helped publicize and advertise the public hearing.

On March 2, 2020, Commissioners Arruda, Riley, and Whiton-O'Brien participated in the MCSW statewide hearing on COVID-19 and its impacts on women and girls. The PCCSW also helped to advertise this event.

On April 29, 2020, Commissioner North participated in a virtual meeting with other regional commissioners and MCSW staff to discuss virtual Advocacy Day and a virtual Girl's Initiative Event.

On May 12, 2020, several PCCSW Commissioners (Elisabeth Arruda, Carolyn Riley, Kristina Whiton-O'Brien, and Karis North) participated in virtual Advocacy Day 2020.

On May 13, 2020, Commissioners Arruda, Riley, North, and Whiton-O'Brien participated in the MCSW's South Shore, Cape, and Islands local virtual advocacy and issues meeting. The PCCSW also helped advertise the meeting.

**Social Media:** The PCCSW has established a Gmail account: [PCCSWMA@gmail.com](mailto:PCCSWMA@gmail.com) and Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Plymouth-County-Commission-on-the-Status-of-Women-2183371068549059/> in order to facilitate communication with interested community members and post information about meetings and hearings. An Instagram page was also established: [@plymouthcountymacsw](https://www.instagram.com/@plymouthcountymacsw). Meeting agendas and notices of hearings and other events are posted to the Facebook page and the Instagram page.

**Preliminary Goals for 2020/2021:**

1. Re-schedule and hold a Girl's Initiative Hearing and a Legislative Tea
2. Continue to refine and establish resources and contacts for the women and girls of Plymouth County. Consider holding a resource fair open to all.
3. Reach out to law enforcement and explore whether there is further opportunity for collaboration.
4. Consider whether the PCCSW wants to establish a permanent legislative committee and get more involved in advocating for specific matters.
5. Continue to explore grant opportunities and work to help break down barriers for women and girls who want to attend PCCSW events.
6. Continue to explore grant opportunities and work to help break down barriers for women and girls who want to attend PCCSW events.
7. Utilize interns again, from a local college or university. Update position description based on this year's experience.
8. Improve marketing, outreach, and social media presence.
9. Build on everything we have learned so far!

Respectfully submitted,

Commissioners of the Plymouth County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

By unanimous vote of the PPCSW

June 13, 2020

## **UPPER MIDDLESEX**

### Upper Middlesex Commission on the Status of Women Annual Report 2019 – 2020 (Submitted June 2020)

#### **Mission**

Uphold ideals and pursue actions consonant with the upward economic and social mobility of women and girls.

We do so by:

- Gathering empirical evidence to mobilize and amplify the voices of women and girls; and
- Generating transformational recommendations that create and sustain accountable systems that enable women and girls to thrive.

#### **Commissioners**

Jennifer Roecklein-Canfield (Littleton), Linda Rossetti (Winchester), Connie Chow (Newton), Anna Tse (Malden), Kaitie Chakoian (Waltham), Kristina Racek-Pachulis (Melrose), Tracy Reilly Ingersoll (Tewksbury), Donna Barry (Medford), and Mary Delorse Coleman (Cambridge)

#### **Community Assessment**

UMCSW, in partnership with the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women and representatives from communities within our Region, focused our community work in 2019-2020 on developing an Equity Audit Pilot, an initiative designed to increase the understanding of gender, along with other inequalities, and to serve as an important tool in improving the status and well-being of all women and girls in large part by informing data collection, contributing to management processes, and contributing to policy development and changes. A full description of these activities can be found in the Advocacy section below.

#### **Hearings/Public Forums**

The UMCSW did not hold any public forums outside of public discussions related to the Equity Audit Pilot described in the Advocacy section below.

#### **Advocacy**

The UMCSW's Advocacy work in 2019-2020 was dedicated entirely to initiating an Equity Audit Pilot in cooperation with leading institutions and two communities within our Region. The Upper Middlesex Regional and Massachusetts Commissions on the Status of Women have initiated a partnership with UMass Boston's *Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy* and UMass Lowell's *Center for Women and Work* to pilot an

intersectional Equity Audit in two Massachusetts communities, with the broader goal of developing guidelines and tools for similar audits to be conducted across the state. The goal of the Equity Audit is to emphasize the importance of understanding gender in concert with other inequalities. Historically, audits such as this have served as important tools in improving the status and well-being of all women and girls by informing data collection, contributing to management processes, and contributing to policy development and changes.

The goal of the Equity Audit Pilot is to define the scope of an intersectional Equity Audit Model for Massachusetts. The Pilot will involve an in-depth exploration of existing models, analysis of data availability, and identification of issues most important to the community. The group secured a UMass Boston FY21 Public

Service Grant and plans to use the proceeds to support preparatory activities for audits to be conducted in Lowell and Arlington and set the stage for obtaining external funds to carry out the audits in these two target communities.

The Equity Audit Pilot's specific objectives are to:

- Identify partners in appropriate government agencies and community organizations in the local context and outline a generalizable model regarding key stakeholders to include in any community that will participate in such an Equity Audit once launched;
- Determine populations and topics of focus as well as inequity measures to include, based on available data; and
- Develop a detailed research design and funding proposal to conduct a full Equity Audit in Lowell and Arlington.

The team determined that Lowell and Arlington – largely due to their varied population sizes and compositions, economic drivers, governmental structures, and elected leadership trends – will serve as appropriate municipal partners for this collaborative project and for launching an Equity Audit Model that can be replicated in other cities and towns. In collaboration with members of the UMCSW, the UMass Boston team will focus on the Arlington context and UMass Lowell will focus on Lowell, with all team members working collaboratively to design a process that will fit both communities and serve as a model for others.

The UMCSW is honored to collaborate with the following individuals and organizations on this exciting work:

Randy Albelda, Department of Economics (UMass Boston); Darcie Boyer, Center for Women and Work (UMass Lowell); Connie Chow, Upper Middlesex Commission on the Status of Women; Mignon Duffy, Department of Sociology (UMass Lowell); Monica Galizzi, Department of Economics (UMass Lowell); Christa Kelleher, Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy (UMass Boston); Cheryl Llewellyn, Department of Sociology (UMass Lowell); Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson, Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy (UMass Boston); Jenifer Whitten-Woodring, Department of Political Science (UMass Lowell)



## Priorities for 2020-2021

1. The UMCSW priorities for the upcoming year are as follows:
  - a. Launch the Equity Audit Pilot with a special emphasis on establishing broader community relationships in support of the Pilot's objectives (see Advocacy section above);
  - b. Continue to utilize a standing Agenda for our bi-monthly meetings. This Agenda includes but is no limited to:
    - i. Legislative/Advocacy, Bill Sponsorship/Endorsements, and Hearing/Listening Event Updates.
    - ii. Community Spotlights, e.g. guests from organizations active in serving our constituents;
    - iii. Create "Listening Tours" in specific towns to capture a larger audience than from a single Hearing; and
    - iv. Craft a discussion agenda for "Listening Tours" that specifically addresses the impact of the pandemic on women, as they hold a disproportionately large share of jobs in the fields most at risk.
    - v. Build upon the UMCSW's use of social media (e.g. visit our Facebook page [here](#)) to extend its reach and continue to build relationships within the communities we serve.



**Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women  
Annual Report  
May 2020**

**Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women ~ Members**

Mary Bridget Burns ~ Sturbridge  
Amy Ebbeson ~ Rutland  
Irene Rodriguez-Hernandez ~ Gardner  
Jill Kasten ~ Worcester  
Suzanne Lewandowski ~ North Brookfield  
Jacqueline McLean ~ Shrewsbury  
Michelle Miller ~ Westminster  
Tonisha Pinckney ~ Leominster  
Randi Zanca ~ Northbridge

**The following were nominated and elected as officers:**

*Amy Ebbeson ~ Chair*  
*Mary Bridget Burns ~ Vice Chair*  
*Randeen Zanca ~ Secretary (note taker)*

**Advisory Board Members**

Judith Ockene ~ Harvard  
Chantel Bethea ~ Worcester  
Joyce McNickles- Sutton

*Purpose:*

The purpose of the Commission is to advance women toward full equity in all areas of life. We promote rights and opportunities for women and girls of every race, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, national origin, ability, age, and sexual orientation. We are grounded in the belief that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. The mission of the Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women is to act as an effective voice for women in the County of Worcester to ensure their equal status in educational, economic, political, health, legal, and social spheres. The commission does this by holding forums and events designed to promote fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the full enjoyment of life for all women through the provision of information, feedback collection, referrals, guidance and community organizing. We build connections to other agencies that serve the needs of women and girls and hold collaboration and cooperation as core values.

*Membership:*

This program year included Amy Ebbeson, Mary Bridget Burns, Irene Rodriguez-Hernandez, Jacqueline McLean, and Randi Zanca. Randi Zanca is an adjunct professor of English at Quinsigamond Community College

in Worcester and is always concerned about women, their higher education, how they pay for it, and how they manage to stay in college with so many other pressures in their lives.

In this program year, the commission experienced membership changes due to term limits. Joann Stemmermann of Bolton, MA completed her term and did not seek another as she and her family were moving out of state. Judith Ockene and Chantel Bethea also reached their term limits but continue as members of the Advisory Council. They were both highly engaged and did not want to leave projects uncompleted. We benefit enormously from their leadership, knowledge base, and social networks and appreciate their ongoing commitment to the WCCSW. We continue to use the Advisory Council to support the larger commission and have added Joyce McNickles to our Advisory Committee ranks. She holds a Ed.D in Adult Education and has an extensive record of advocating for racial justice and women's empowerment. She was a founding member of the Massachusetts Women of Color Coalition and serves on the Attorney General's Task Force Against Bias and Hate.

We added three new members recommended by the statewide Commission. Dr. Tonisha Pinckney is a professor of Criminal Justice and serves in numerous capacities to empower women, especially women of color impacted by violence and abuse. She is a member of the National Alliance for Mental Illness and a celebrated author. Jill Kasten has worked at both ends of the life cycle, originally working with young moms in childbirth education; she now serves the elder population. Her experiences have given our commission valuable insight into the needs of women as they enter motherhood and as they face health and economic challenges in later years. Michelle Miller directs the Center for Women and Enterprise and brings experience in economic development and entrepreneurship. All three of these women were appointed in January and have made significant contributions to our Commission in the short time they have been with us.

#### *Hearings/Public Forums:*

#### **Investing in Girls Alliance - Worcester County CSW participated in the Seventh Annual Statewide Gathering - May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019 in Sturbridge, MA.**

The Investing in Girls Alliance (IIGA) is an unprecedented collaboration to address the challenges girls face in the crucial middle-school transition years. IIGA's mission is to improve services for middle school girls in central Massachusetts through research, education, advocacy, and collaboration. The ultimate vision of the Investing in Girls Alliance is that all girls grow up to be happy, healthy, and productive women. In order to achieve our mission, we focus on three priority areas. Physical, Mental and Sexual Health are core to girls' well-being, and good health provides the foundation for achievements throughout her lifetime. Education and Economic Empowerment gives girls the tools and opportunities they need to oversee their lives and actively engage in their families and communities. Addressing issues of Violence and Safety is fundamental to girls' success; we must ensure the safety of girls where they grow, learn, work, and play. The work of IIGA centers around four key strategies: Data and Research to effectively measure the wellbeing of local girls and understand their current and emerging needs; Public Education to raise community awareness of the unique needs, assets and challenges of middle school aged girls; Promoting Best Practices through networked training and peer sharing; and Advocacy to secure gender equitable policies and sufficient resources for girls by aligning with like-minded partners across the state, including the MA Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.

#### **Women's Advocacy Day at the Statehouse – 5/21/19**

#### **Unsung Heroine Awards – 6/18/19**

## **Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women – Fourth Annual Legislative Breakfast September 9<sup>th</sup> 2019**

The meeting included breakfast, networking, and a panel discussion among local elected officials and experts on policy issues impacting women's issues.

### **Semi Annual Convening at Worcester Academy 12/19/19**

### **Virtual Public Hearing 4/2/20**

#### *Additional Activities:*

#### **Erskine Awards**

#### **EPIC Service Warriors Launch**

#### **Behavioral Health Listening Sessions w/ Marylou Sudders**

#### **No Small Matter Screening 9/19**

#### **DayBreak Breakfast 10/7**

#### **SHINE Gala 10/10**

#### **Workplace Bullying Conference 10/18**

#### **Self Care Fair at LIFT**

#### **Together for Kids**

#### **LIFT/Jana's Place Opening**

#### **Turn off the Red Light Summit 11/20/19**

#### **Chantel Bethea for School Committee**

#### **AG's Human Trafficking Summit 1/16 & 1/17/20**

#### **Black Women and Violence Forum at Clark University 3/10/20**

#### **Building and Sustaining Hope- Virtual Suicide Prevention Conference**

### **Worcester County CSW participated in the CHIP (community health improvement plan)**

Vision: Greater Worcester is a great place to be born, grow up, learn, live, work, raise a family, grow, and participate in community life.

**International Women's Day** is a worldwide event celebrating the achievements of women while calling for greater equality.

#### *Conclusion:*

The world remains far from equitable in its distribution of resources. The women of Worcester County have a lot of work to do to achieve the potential and full equality of all women. Like everyone else, the pandemic has forced us to pivot and direct our attention on the immediate needs of women in Worcester County. Prior to the introduction of COVID-19, we were planning a forum on Healthy Sexuality. In our region, sex education has been removed from schools. We know that a lack of information about sex and consent contributes greatly to sexual abuse and other poor outcomes for girls and women such as early pregnancy and exploitive relationships. The suggested curriculums also don't address gender identity or sexual orientation and we believe that girls need access to comprehensive sex education to make informed choices about their future. This aligns with the work on passing the Healthy Youth Act.

#### *Priority Issues identified:*

- Mental health

- Health care navigation, available services, transportation to services, appeal process when service is denied
- Culturally Competent/Appropriate Services
- Domestic violence
- Sexual abuse/rape
- Economics for women – Jobs, Financial literacy
- Childcare, Child hunger – WIC
- Immigrant women
- Education (pre-k through college)
  - STEM pipeline
  - Head-start
- Teen pregnancy
- Substance abuse
- Eating disorders
- Seniors
- Veterans

*Goals for 2020 - 2021*

1. Collaborate with the Mass CSW and Regional Commissions to hold more public hearings in order to raise awareness of critical issues facing women in Massachusetts and to grow the participation and involvement of individual and organizational allies in the work of advancing equity for women of Massachusetts.
2. Maintain regular contact with our legislators and officials on issues that concern women that have been identified as our priority areas of focus.
3. Continue to collaborate with other organizations and public officials in order to support women and girls through public awareness.
4. Work closely with our sister commissions on implementing and developing best practices for the betterment of each commission.
5. Work on writing and proposing new state-level legislative policies for women.
6. Attend community events and share literature about the commission to promote awareness of our role and work to increase involvement in our activities.

Submitted by the Worcester County CSW

## APPENDIX

### Cape and Islands Public Hearing Summary

#### Let Your Voice Be Heard: November 12, 2019

##### Public Hearing Information:

**Date:** November 12, 2019 at 5:30 p.m.

**Location:** SEIU Local 1199 Union Hall, 89 Lewis Bay Road, Unit 2, Hyannis, MA

**Purpose:** To hear from individuals, particularly women and girls, about their concerns and share their stories to help CCICSW to address issues and concerns of women and girls on Cape Cod and the Islands.

##### Format of Hearing:

The Commissioners sat behind a row of tables at the front of a room with rows of chairs set up for attendees. Those wishing to speak were invited to speak from their seats, sitting or standing. The order of testimony was determined through the sign in sheet; anyone who did not sign in was invited to speak after those who had signed in were given an opportunity to testify.

**Time Allotted:** 5 minutes per speaker; some speakers spoke more than once.

##### Attendance:

- **Citizens:** 12
- **Elected Officials:** 1 (Rep. Sarah Peake)
- **Media:** 1 (Cape Cod Media Center Reporter)
- **Public Speakers:** 6
- **Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women:** Tina Games (Chair), Joan Walsh Freedman (Vice Chair), Linda Cebula (Treasurer), Lisa McNeill (Secretary), Katia Regina Dacunha, Anna Noble Dunphy, Tracy Johnson, Lisa Malcolm, Melissa Murphy, Lynda wan- N'Tani, Helen Bresnahan (emerita)

##### Announcements:

Notice of this Public Hearing was announced in the following ways:

- Sent to MCSW for posting
- Invited all Cape and Islands legislators
- Press releases to all Cape and Islands newspapers, magazines, and radio stations
- Flyers sent to all Cape and Islands Town Halls
- Posted on the CCICSW webpage and on the CCICSW FB page
- Flyers and/or press release also sent to various list servs (WE CAN, Barnstable County Dept of Human Services, CORD, Cape Cod Healthcare SEIU Union)
- Flyers delivered to some libraries on Cape Cod
- Flyers were translated into Portuguese and Spanish and posted in various locations Announcements were made beginning in mid- to late October 2019

##### Background:

As part of CCICSW's ongoing effort to hear from the community, and women living in the region specifically, a hearing was held to further understand the community and the issues that are important to the women and girls of Cape Cod, Nantucket, and Martha's Vineyard. This information adds to the accumulating body of

information that has been gathered by other means, including an Online Survey and Public Hearing in 2017, MCSW Public Hearing in Barnstable in 2018, and a Listening Circle in 2019. Unlike the past 2017 Public Hearing and 2019 Listening Circle, CCICSW chose not to focus on a specific topic for this November 2019 Public Hearing, opening it up to any and all issues of concern to women and girls on Cape Cod and the Islands. The Hearing More Voices/Reaching More Women Working Group of CCICSW began planning the hearing in Spring 2019 but was required to take a break during the summer due to internal Commission workings. The Working Group began planning again in September, and it worked with the Visibility Working Group to publicize the hearing.

### **Description of the Public Hearing:**

The hearing was advertised through public announcements, press releases, fliers, and online postings for two to three weeks prior to the date. Letters were also sent to all Cape and Islands Delegates. Considering there was a winter storm (including freezing rain and snow) the evening of the hearing, attendance exceeded our expectations with 14 attendees, including State Representative Sarah Peake, a reporter from Cape Cod Media, and 6 people testifying.

The Commissioners sat in the front of the room and welcomed people to speak from their seats, sitting or standing. No microphones or recording devices were used at the hearing, although the Cape Cod Media report did interview Commissioners Tina Games, Lisa Malcolm, and Joan Walsh Freedman, and State Representative Sarah Peake before the hearing started.

Commissioners listened to the speakers and took notes. Clarifying questions were occasionally asked by Commissioners to those testifying. Chair Tina Games asked any written testimony to be given or emailed, however none of the women who testified provided written testimony.

The hearing ran for approximately two hours. Refreshments were donated and provided to create a more comfortable and welcoming experience. Upon arrival, attendees were asked to sign in and indicate if they wanted to testify. Contact information was gathered.

Tina Games, Chair of CCICSW, started with a welcome to the evening and an introduction to CCICSW's work, mentioning that housing and access to healthcare were issues emphasized through the CCCISW 2017 survey and hearing. All Commissioners introduced themselves with the towns they come from. Tina introduced State Representative Sarah Peake, who gave brief remarks. Commissioner Tracy Johnson went over the format for the evening, including 5-minute speaking time and the order of testimony. The order of testimony was determined through the sign-in sheet, and anyone who did not sign in was invited to testify after those who had signed in had testified. Commissioners Lisa Malcolm and Tina Games provided closing remarks and thanked people for coming at the end of the evening.

### **Action:**

The information gathered through this hearing has been compiled and discussed by the Commissioners in order to understand the issues of importance to our region's women and girls. The stories and testimony provided during the hearing point to advocacy and policy efforts that could be taken in the areas of **legal and housing challenges for those dealing with domestic abuse** and **homelessness and housing options for elders**. Additional underlying issues of safety in shelters, "welfare to work," affordable childcare, and education were also discussed. The Commission will utilize this information to further prioritize issues to positively affect policy, as well as inform our support and advocacy of specific legislation. The hearing summaries and data are available to the public and it is encouraged that individuals, groups, government and elected officials access

and utilize this information to further inform their work and advocacy for women and girls.

**Testimony:** *See attached*

**Comments Summary:** Attached: Hearing Agenda Testimony Summaries Publicity – Flyers and Press Release

**Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women Public Hearing Testimony, November 12, 2019**

SEIU Local 1199 Union Hall, 89 Lewis Bay Road, Unit 2, Hyannis, MA

**WV, Hyannis, MA – Testimony: Domestic Abuse and Legal Challenges**

WV testified to struggles related to a separation, going on for about 2.5 years. She talked about legal challenges for low-income women, especially those who have experienced domestic abuse. There is no effective process for helping people like her. She lost her home and job and suffered many issues, including a culture of poverty. She struggled with mental health issues and was not able to navigate through the legal systems. WV said she felt that her partner's words were more valued than hers in the legal system. It is critical to have help for women to navigate the legal process, especially providing help for low-income women. WV said it is important to have organizations like CCICSW to share these stories. She is worried about retaliation from her husband.

**LT, Centerville, MA – Testimony: Homelessness, Senior Homelessness, Homeless Shelter(s)**

LT lived in Brewster and became homeless when she was thrown out by the university that owned her home. She is an elder and has been waiting for 6 years for housing (she is 75), and she is one of the younger seniors. Sometimes she and other seniors have been thrown out of the shelters; there needs to be housing options for elders. There is a housing application that goes out all over the state for housing options. LT talked about her situation with the application: she uses a PO Box, but then went into the hospital and couldn't get her mail. Not having a permanent address makes it challenging and using the shelter is not seen as a good thing.

- (Rep. Sarah Peake mentioned that the Governor's bill is not necessarily an elderly housing bill, but it would help to increase the affordable housing inventory.)

LT also talked about loosening the regulations that some towns have, not just for permanent housing but transitional housing as well. Finally, housing also affects our healthcare systems; when LT had to have surgery, she was put out on the streets after being released from the hospital.

**MH Hyannis, MA – Testimony: Homelessness, Homeless Shelter(s), Domestic Abuse**

MH has been chronically homeless for 5 years. She left her abusive husband and went into a family shelter with her children, but had to leave because she was making too much money. This led her back to her abuser because she did not have other housing options. She could not stay with him due to safety concerns, but she did have to leave her children with him to provide them with stable housing. MH ended up on Cape Cod because of her domestic abuse situation. Now she is at risk of losing her child rights because she is not in a stable housing environment. She also has trouble getting to visits with her kids because of transportation as well as the rules of the shelter. She said that if she had housing she would be able to get her kids back. Additionally, she doesn't feel safe in the shelter due to issues such as staff sleeping while on duty. Her case worker is great, but she has 75 people she is working with. Drugs/addiction is not her problem, but she does suffer from depression and bipolar



disorder. The rules of the shelter are challenging; curfew is at 3:30, and once you are in you're not allowed to leave, which makes working afternoon and evening shifts difficult. (She was almost not allowed to attend the hearing tonight.) She was in Safe Harbor Shelter for 18 months, and she still couldn't find affordable housing.

**LT** (*Additional Comments*): LT added that she agreed with MH that the shelter is not safe for women and staff are not trained. They need to be retrained and trained in conflict resolution. She also states that the nursing homes are also terrible.

**WV** (*Additional Comments*) WV agreed with LT and MH, saying the "shelter (on Winter Street), is hell." She said, "We are abused women, we need a shelter for abused women." (This was echoed by MH, "Angel House is for recovering addicted women, but what about abused women?")

#### **MJ South Yarmouth, MA – Testimony: Shelter Standards**

MJ talked about minimum housing standards that must be met, especially if there are children involved. There are no minimum standards for women's shelters. The fees paid to the shelters by the state are not enough to provide the adequate shelter and services to women.

#### **TW, Social Worker – Testimony: Domestic Abuse**

TW sees a lot of abusers who get away with a slap on the wrist after they nearly kill their partner in front of their kids. TW mentioned a program called Home Base which provides subsidized rent for up to a year or pays first and last month's rent. TW believes that the Home Base program is ineffective, especially because it has been cut from two years to one year. We need Welfare to Work programs that we used to have.

#### **GR, Osterville, MA – Testimony: Addiction, Education, Breaking the Cycle of Poverty**

GR is in long term addiction recovery. She said that getting clean was just the beginning of the journey. She dropped out of school and was a single mother. Support for education was very short-term. She has climbed her way out, but out of sheer luck and education, and she won a housing lottery. One barrier was childcare. She had to wait until her son was 5 years old so she could go back to school. Childcare is counterproductive with everything you earn going to childcare. GR said she could not have gotten her job if she hadn't gotten an education. Education also changed her mind and helped her grow and communicate. GR said the sooner we help women in these situations, the sooner they will become working members of the community and can help themselves. She is now \$60,000 in debt because of education, but it was a conscious decision. She is happy she did it, and she feels like she has broken the poverty cycle in her family...and her kids want to go to college. She said Mass Rehab does it the right way, with no pigeonholing people into "what are the market demand jobs" but treating people as individuals.

#### **Rep. Sarah Peake, Provincetown, MA**

As State Rep. Peake was leaving, she let people know she was taking notes. She knows there is a need for shelters to have standards, training, and legal help. "We get the services we pay for, and if we are not paying more than McDonald's or Starbuck's then we are not going to get good people."

One person asked about a program in Chicago that is a home share program for older people sharing houses with young people. She asked if there was anything like that on the Cape for younger people to share with elders. TW talked about the Lower Cape House Sharing program that started but could not get off the ground.

## Hearing Advertisements/Flyers:

**Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women**

CCICSWInfo@gmail.com

For additional information, please contact the Commission at  
[CCICSWInfo@gmail.com](mailto:CCICSWInfo@gmail.com)

**Let Your Voice Be Heard Public Hearing**

**Location: SEIU Local 1199 Union Hall**  
89 Lewis Bay Road, Unit 2, Hyannis  
*(On the corner of Lewis Bay Road and South Street,  
across from Cape Cod Hospital)*

**November 12, 2019 @ 5:30 PM**  
**Registration begins at 5:15 PM**

**Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women –  
Public Hearing**

The Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women invites all to our Public Hearings. We encourage individuals, particularly women and girls, to speak their truth about their concerns and share their stories to help the Commission to address issues and concerns of women and girls of the Commonwealth. Organizations that address or identify women's concerns are encouraged to bring women to speak and/or to provide written testimony. (A written copy of your comments is desirable and greatly appreciated.)

**AGENDA**

Registration


Welcome, Review of the Commission & Executive Summary of 2017  
Survey and Public Hearing, Recognition of Elected Officials  
(Tina, Games, Chair, CCICSW)

Explanation of Hearing Process  
(Tracy Johnson, Hearing More Voices Working Group Member)

Testimony by Women in Audience

Wrap Up & Thank You  
(Lisa Malcolm, Hearing More Voices Working Group Member)

*The mission of the Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women is to provide a permanent effective voice for women across Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket Counties that facilitates and fosters community and inclusiveness among women. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights and the full enjoyment of life for all women throughout their lives.*




**CCICSW Commissioners**

Tina Games, Chair  
Harwich

Joan Walsh-Freedman,  
Vice Chair  
South Yarmouth

Lisa McNeill, Secretary  
Wareham



reasurer  
responding  
water  
scunha

Anna Noble Dunphy  
North Falmouth

Laura Innis  
Falmouth

Lisa Malcolm  
Osterville

Melissa Murphy  
Nantucket

Lynda wan-N'Tani  
Harwich

Helen Bresnahan, Emerita  
Bourne



# Press Release

## CCICSW Commissioners

Tina Games, Chair

Harwich

Lisa McNeill, Secretary

Yarmouth

Joan Walsh-Freedman, Treasurer

South Yarmouth

Linda Cebula

Harwich

Katia Regina Dacunha

Hyannis

Anna Noble Dunphy

North Falmouth

Laura Innis

Falmouth

Tracy Johnson

Brewster Lisa

Malcolm

Osterville

Melissa Murphy

Nantucket

Lynda wan-N'Tani

Harwich

## Speaking Your Truth

Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women Open Hearing

**Brewster, MA October 8, 2019:** The Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women (CCICSW) will be holding a hearing at the SEIU local 1199 Union Hall, 89 Lewis Bay Road Unit 2, Hyannis, MA on Tuesday, November 12, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. Attendees will have an opportunity to share their stories and speak about their concerns with regard to the lives and needs of Cape and Island women. All testimony is documented and sent to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women for review and consideration when forming their policy agenda for possible legislation.

CCICSW invites all to our hearings. We encourage individuals, particularly women and girls to speak about their concerns and share their stories to help inform the Commission's mission to address issues important to the women and girls of the Commonwealth. Organizations that address or identify women's concerns are invited to attend, to bring clients who wish to testify and to submit written testimony as well. A written copy of all comments is desirable and appreciated.

Please join us on Tuesday, November 12<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m.

## We want to hear from you!



## Regional Hearing & Public Testimony on Women's Issues



### The Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women

The Commission is responsible for studying, reviewing and reporting on the status of women across Cape Cod & the Islands to the State Commission. It is charged with advising our elected officials on the effect of proposed legislation on women.

To that end, the Commission conducts regional public hearings to collect testimony\* and opinions on women's issues and concerns.

**WHEN: Tuesday, November 12, 2019, 5:30 – 7:00 PM**

**WHERE: SEIU Local 1199 Union Hall, 89 Lewis Bay Road, Unit 2, Hyannis**  
(On the corner of Lewis Bay Road and South Street, across from Cape Cod Hospital)

**\*Open to the public    \*Oral & written comments will be accepted    \*Light snacks provided**

\*Testimony or comments is simply telling your story, challenge or concern with regards to issues that affect yourself, family and community. No experience is required to speak. This is a no-judgement, safe community that wants to hear your concerns to inform our elected officials of the issues that affect their constituency.

For more information, or to RSVP, email [CCICSWInfo@gmail.com](mailto:CCICSWInfo@gmail.com)

### All are invited to give comments

If you need reasonable accommodations to fully participate, please use the above email at least 7 days prior to the Public Hearing.

## Nós queremos ouvir de você!



### Audiência Regional e Testemunho Público sobre questões femininas



#### The Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women

A Comissão é responsável por estudar, revisar e informar sobre a situação das mulheres em Cape Cod e nas Ilhas junto à Comissão Estadual. Ela é responsável por assessorar nossos representantes eleitos sobre os efeitos das legislações propostas sobre as mulheres.

**Para esse fim, a Comissão realiza audiências públicas regionais para coletar testemunhos \* e opiniões sobre questões e preocupações das mulheres.**

**QUANDO:** terça-feira, 12 de novembro de 2019, 17:30 - 19:00

**LOCAL:** SEIU Local 1199 Union Hall, 89 Lewis Bay Road, Unidade 2, Hyannis  
(Na esquina da Lewis Bay Road e South Street, em frente ao Hospital Cape Cod)

**\*Aberto ao público \* Comentários orais e escritos serão aceitos \* um leve coquetel será servido**  
Depoimentos ou comentários é simplesmente o da contar sua história, desafio ou preocupação com relação a questões que afetam a você, a família e a comunidade. Nenhuma experiência é necessária para falar. Esta é uma comunidade segura e sem julgamento, que deseja ouvir suas preocupações para informar nossos representantes eleitos sobre os problemas que afetam seu círculo eleitoral. Para maiores informações, ou para confirmar RSVP, e-mail [CCICSWInfo@gmail.com](mailto:CCICSWInfo@gmail.com)

#### Todos são convidados a fazer comentários

Se você precisar de acomodações razoáveis para participar, use o e-mail acima para requisitar com pelo menos 7 dias antes da Audiência Pública.

## ¡Queremos escuchar de ti!



### Audiencia regional y testimonio públicosobre cuestiones de la mujer



#### The Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women

La Comisión es responsable de estudiar, revisar e informar sobre la situación de la mujer en Cape Cod y las Islas a la Comisión Estatal. Se encarga de asesorar a nuestros representantes electos sobre el efecto de la legislación propuesta sobre las mujeres.

**Con ese fin, la Comisión lleva a cabo audiencias públicas regionales para recopilar testimonios \* y opiniones sobre cuestiones y preocupaciones de las mujeres.**

**CUANDO:** martes 12 de noviembre de 2019, 5:30 a 7:00 p.m. **DÓNDE:** SEIU Local 1199 Union Hall, 89 Lewis Bay Road, Unidad 2, Hyannis (En la esquina de Lewis Bay Road y South Street, frente al Hospital Cape Cod)

**\* Abierto al público \* Se aceptarán comentarios orales y escritos \* Se proporcionan bocadillos\***  
Testimonio o comentarios es simplemente contar su historia, desafío o preocupación con respecto a los problemas que le afectan a usted, a su familia y a la comunidad. No se requiere experiencia para hablar. Esta es una comunidad segura y sin juicio que quiere escuchar sus inquietudes para informar a nuestros funcionarios electos sobre los problemas que afectan a su distrito electoral. Para obtener más información, o confirmar la asistencia, envíe un correo electrónico [CCICSWInfo@gmail.com](mailto:CCICSWInfo@gmail.com)

#### Todos están invitados para comentar

Si necesita adaptaciones razonables para participar plenamente, utilice el correo electrónico encima para hacer su solicitud al menos 7 días antes de la audiencia pública.

## **Eastern Regional Commission on the Status of Women and Girls Meeting Agenda(s)**

**Location:** Jubilee Church, 1550 Blue Hills Avenue, Mattapan

**Date:** Thursday, September 5, 2019

**Time:** 6:30-8:30 PM

- Public Input
- Approval of Minutes from July meeting
- Update on Outreach Letter to Organization
- Update on Appointments to ERCW
- Review of Organizations List
- An Act Supporting Parents Running for Public Office (S.408 | H.639)
- Fall Grant from MCSW
- Discussion of a Survey of Community Needs
- Event Idea: Tough Guys
- Plan to Add to List of Community Leaders and Resource Guide

Eastern Regional Commission on the Status of Women includes the towns of Avon, Brookline, Canton, Cohasset, Dedham, Foxborough, Holbrook, Hull, Milton, Plainville, Randolph, Sharon, Stoughton, and Westwood, and the cities of Boston, Braintree, Chelsea, Quincy, Revere, Weymouth, and Winthrop.

Massachusetts Eastern Regional Commission on the Status of Women & Girls

Meeting Facilitators: Michelle Lanteigne, Co Chair and Margaret Adams, Co Chair

Attendees: Commissioners: Arnaa Alcon, Michelle Lanteigne, Jamica Nadine Love, Margaret Adams, Toby Kamens Rodman, Tamisha L. Civil

### **Agenda**

- Last Meeting Follow-up (7/11/19)
- Review of July's Meeting Minutes
- Commissioner Love's letter introduction
- Commissioner Love will confirm meeting space at Northeastern for 10/3
- Commissioner Lanteigne will create a google doc for the organizational resource list

### **New Business**

- Motion to correct Michelle's name. Motion approved.
- Commissioners greeting, wellness check
- Letter of Introduction was finalized and corrections were made by Commissioner Margaret

Adams, Co-Chair.

- Google Doc list completed by Michelle Lanteigne, Co Chair.
- Aiming for each Commissioner to send 3 Letter of Introduction to an organization
- Commissioners Love and Lanteigne will listen in on the WEB Conference on September 20th, and will report back October 3rd for the meeting.
- Link will be sent to have more women apply to become Commissioners for MCSW.
- Drafting a survey for women and girls in the community that came to the documentary.

#### **Notes:**

- Barbara Gutman will be resigning for the Commission. Selection process for a replacement commissioner begins.
- Elected: Margaret Adams (second term) and Michelle Lanteigne, co-chairs; Tamisha L. Civil, secretary, Kerry Akashian, vice-chair (second term); Mona Thompson, treasurer and social media facilitator (second term)
- Commissioners whose terms are expiring need to notify one of the co-chairs by 10/1/19 that they wish to be reappointed. The State Commission makes the decision. Everyone is eligible for reappointment for two 3-year terms. Those whose first term was less than three years are eligible for two additional full terms.
- December and May meetings will be replaced by State Commission Events. We will hold a retreat in June.

#### **Meeting Dates:**

- 10/3 -Northeastern University
- 11/7- Quincy Location
- December- MCSW Convening, likely on December 19th
- 1/9- Jubilee
- 2/6-Jubilee
- 3/5-Jubilee
- 4/2- Location TBD
- May -MCSW Convening, likely on May 20th
- June 7th- retreat 4:30pm-8:30pm
- Can we reach out to those who attended Misrepresentation and what do we want them to do?

#### **Proposed October Agenda: Action Items:**

1. Each Commissioner will Identify at least 10 organizations by the next meeting
2. Updates from Commissioners
3. Approval of Minutes September
4. Update on the Outreach Letter to Organization
5. Update on the Fall Grant Conference Call from MCSW and Ideas
6. Appointment of Commissioner to ERCSW
7. Letter to the Editor on Act Supporting Parents Running for Public Office
8. Review of Draft Survey of Regional Issues

9. Event Idea: Tough Guys
10. Set Agenda for November

**Next Meeting Agenda:** October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019, Northeastern University, 6:30pm-8:30 pm

\*Tamisha Civil will send an email a week prior to confirm location\*

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**Location:** Stoughton Public Library, 84 Park St, Stoughton, MA 02072

**Date:** Thursday, November 7, 2019

**Time:** 6:30-8:30 PM

- Public Input
- Commissioners Updates
- Approval of Minutes from September
- Update on the Outreach to Organization and Resource Guide
- Update on the Fall Grant Conference Call from MCSW and Ideas
- Recommendations on Appointment of Commissioner to ERCW
- Letter to the Editor on Act Supporting Parents Running for Public Office
- Support for Mass Commission on Women Regional Hearing
- Review of Draft Survey of Regional Issues
- Event Idea: Tough Guys
- Set Agenda for January

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Massachusetts Eastern Regional Commission on the Status of Women & Girls

Meeting Facilitators: Michelle Lanteigne, Co Chair and Margaret Adams, Co Chair

Attendees: Commissioners: Michelle Lanteigne, Jamica Nadine Love, Margaret Adams, Mona Thompson, Tamisha L. Civil

## **Agenda**

### **New Business**

- September Meeting Minutes Approved
- Commissioners reviewed application and resumes to elect a new Commissioner

- Commissioners Sisterly Wellness Check
- Follow up on Community Outreach Organizations
- Regional Public Hearing November 21st, 2019 at Weymouth High School
- Missed Fall Grant Deadline
- Drafting a survey for women and girls in the community that came to the documentary

## Notes

- Regional Public Hearing November 21st, 2019 Weymouth High School, 5pm-7pm, Mary Jo Livingstone Humanities Center, 1 Wildcat Way South Weymouth, Ma 02190
- Tough Guy Documentary-The Government price (including the rights to use for a screening) is \$350. You can find the preview for Tough Guise 2 (Full or Abridged Clean) here: <https://shop.mediaed.org/tough-guise-2-p45.aspx>
- Commissioner Love would like to have another Commissioner assist with the Conference
  - Call line if she's running late: Dial -In (605) 472-5514 Access Code- 502724 Host Pin- 1471
- Woman Foundation Boston is available to meet with Commissioners to talk about our mission. Please respond in a timely manner, if you can't make it that's perfectly fine.
- Dates Available are:
  - Mon Dec 9, 12 noon - 3:30 pm
  - Weds Dec 11, 10 am - 3:30 pm
  - Weds Jan 8, 10 am - 3:30 pm
  - Mon Jan 13, 10 am - 3:30 pm
  - Weds Jan 29, 10 am - 3:30 pm
- December and May meeting will be replaced by State Commission Events
- We will hold a retreat in June.
- Can we reach out to those who attended Misrepresentation and what do we want them to do?

## Meeting Dates:

- December- MCSW Convening, likely on December 19th
- 1/9- HealthWorks Wellness Community Fitness (TBD) Dorchester, Ma
- 2/6- Jubilee
- 3/5- Jubilee
- 4/2- Location TBD
- May- MCSW Convening likely on May 20th
- June 7th- retreat 4:30pm-8:30pm

## Proposed November Agenda

1. Updates from Commissioners
2. Approval of Minutes November
3. Update on the Outreach Letter to Organization
4. Resource Guide
5. Appointment of Commissioner to ERCW
6. Review of Draft Survey of Regional Issues



7. Next Grant to be uses for Tough Guy II event
8. Set Agenda for January 2020

**Next Meeting Date:** January 9th, 2020 (TBD), HealthWorks Wellness

**Next Meeting Date:** January 9th, 2020 (TBD), HealthWorks Wellness Community Fitness, Dorchester MA, 6:30pm-8:30pm

\*will send an email a week prior to confirm location\*

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**Location:** Codman Square Health Center Wellness Campus , 450 Washington Street in Dorchester Multi-Purpose Room

**Date:** January 9, 2020

**Time:** 6:30-8:30 PM

- Public Input
- Commissioners Updates
- Approval of Minutes from November
- Information on the the Daily Table and Healthworks Community Fitness Programs at Codman Square Health Center
- Update from MCSW Convening
- Update on the Outreach Letter to Organization
- Resource Guide
- Review of Draft Survey of Regional Issues
- Next Grant Cycle for Tough Guy Event
- Set Agenda for February 2020

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Massachusetts Eastern Regional Commision on the Status of Women & Girls

Commissioner Meeting January 9, 2020 6:30pm-8:30pm  
Health Center Wellness Campus, Dorchester Meeting  
Facilitator: Margaret Adams, Co Chair

**Attendees:** Commissioners: Margaret Adams, Mona Thompson, Tamisha L. Civil, Amanda Crab and Kerry

## Agenda

- New Business
- Kerry to bring Women's History books for Commissioners to review
- Public Hearing April 2, 2020 (Location TBD)
- Finding a new documentary for Women and Girls
- Book Club (Push Out) by Morris Monquie "The Criminalizing of Black Girls in Schools" available on Amazon
- Follow up with Organizations Commissioners who received letters
- Grant is now Open, Margaret will be writing for it
- Margaret created a letter for Commissioners to provide to their town political leaders.

## Notes:

- Tough Guys is not a good documentary that is geared towards the views of masculinity and its impact on women and girls.
- Commissioners will start focusing on Obesity and Women Health issues
- Commissioners are looking to start a book club to engage women and girls on Facebook and Instagram.
- Getting rights to show the Documentary for Push Out for June's retreat.

Commissioner Mona Thompson is having a Dash International Conference in March 2020 at Jubilee Stoughton Camps and in May 2020 Boston Campus. She would like to incorporate the Eastern Regional Commission in some way in the Conference.

1. The theme of the conference is Rebirth
2. Speakers are coming from Australia, Texas, Rhode Island and Boston
3. Panels include- follow your dream, political, mental health, commissioners panels
4. Stoughton Campus will have approximately 500 multicultural women
5. Stoughton conference will be March 5th - March 7th ,2020
6. Boston conference will be May 6th - May 9th, 2020
7. Anniversary Girl Program April 18th, 2020 at Lantana's in Randolph

## Meeting Dates:

- 2/6-Jubilee
- 3/5-Jubilee
- 4/2- Location TBD
- May -MCSW Convening (likely May 2020)
- June 6th (Retreat) TBD

## Action Items:

1. Order Book (Push Out) by Monquie Morris and have it by next meeting

2. Starting a Book Club
3. Resource Guide
4. Set Agenda for February 2020

### **Next Meeting Agenda**

February 6th, 2020 - Jubilee, 1500 Blue Hill Avenue, Mattapan, MA 02126 6:30pm-8:30pm

\*will send an email a week prior to confirm location\*

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**Location:** Jubilee Church 1500 Blue Hill Avenue, Mattapan, MA 02126

**Date:** February 6, 2020

**Time:** 6:30-8:30 PM

- Public Input
- Commissioners Updates
- Approval of Minutes from January
- Next Grant Cycle for Push Out Showing Documentary
- Discussion on PushOut Text
- Update on the Outreach Letter to Organization
- Resource Guide
- Review of Draft Survey of Regional Issues
- Set Agenda for March 2020

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### **Eastern Regional Commission on the Status of Women February 6, 2020 6:30-8:30 PM**

**Attendees:** Margaret Adams, Mona Thompson, Amanda Crabb, Michelle lanteigne, Toby Rodman

Meeting convened at 6:40 PM.

Voted to accept Meeting Minutes with the request to change Amanda Crabb's name on the minutes.

**Commissioners Updates:** Mona Thompson reported that she met with the middle school principal in Canton Public Schools. She shared the events of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women. She will try

to do some sort of activities at the middle school to support the goals of civic engagement.

Aarna Alcone has resigned from the Commission. Chairs will communicate with Sasha to determine how to have another commissioner appointed.

**Social Media** Please make sure to share the ERCSW Facebook and Instagram pages with friends to make sure we can add to our list of contacts.

**Push Out Documentary:** Saturday, June 6th - potential date for documentary at 1:00 PM at the Jubilee Church. We would participate in our annual retreat (9:00AM-12:00 PM). The group discussed perhaps pulling together a panel to discuss the issue after the movie. Please be ready with names to contribute and outreach to those you know.

Make sure to get the book *Push Out: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*. We will discuss chapters 1 and 2 at the next meeting.

**Update on Outreach to Other Groups** Tamisha Lucien is meeting with Liz Freedman. See update from Mona Thompson from the Canton Public Schools. Amanda Crabb reached out to Curry College to see if we could meet there. It is not likely due to liability. Amanda also outreached to Women's Federation on campus. She will likely meet with them and report back.

**Important Dates** During the Semi-Annual Regional Convening in December, a segment of the meeting focused on the Girl's Initiative Project. The MCSW received supplemental funding from the Speaker of the House to host events focused on girls. With the funding, the Commission is planning to hold girl-focused listening sessions in April and a girls' summit in June. If your Regional Commission is interested in participating in either or both of these events, please let me know so that I can provide you with additional information.

MCSW Advocacy Day is scheduled on Wednesday, May 13, 2020, 9:00am - 1:00pm. If you are planning to bring a group with you, let me know so that we can schedule a meeting in the upcoming month to arrange for accommodations. Semi-Annual Convening of the Regional Commissions is scheduled on May 13th, 1:30pm – 3:30pm, following Advocacy Day. More information to come at a later date.

On February 25th, from 6:30-8:30 at the Framingham Public Library, we will host another series on reproductive justice at the Framingham Public Schools.

**Resource Guide Update** We have not been able to make headway on this goal from the retreat this summer. We agreed to move to a Google Doc. Everyone agreed to add five resources to the document before the next meeting. We assigned each commissioner a particular area in which to research five organizations/resources. The list of the following topics was assigned: Michelle-Disability; Amda-Immigration; Mona-Children; and Families; Margaret-LGBTQ; Toby-Health Care. Please include the following information in identifying the

resource: name of the organization; address; phone number; DDPC number; website; short description.

**April 5, 2020 Hearing** We have not been able to identify a location to have a hearing. Mona Thompson will check to see if the Canton Public Library is available. Amanda Crabb will check to see if the Quincy Public Library or Codman Square Library is available. Mona Thompson will check to see if the Stoughton gym for her church is also available as a last resource. Tamisha Lucien is checking on the Avon Public Library. Let Margaret Adams know as soon as possible as a location is identified so that we can complete flyers and begin advertising.

**Survey** Margaret Adams shared the survey administered from the Cape Cod and Island Commission. Using this survey, the group revised and created a new version to meet our needs. Margaret Adams will create a draft to share at the March meeting to be distributed afterwards via social media and other upcoming meetings.

### **March 2020 Agenda**

- Public Input
- Commissioner's Update
- Approval of February Minutes
- Grant Update
- Resource Guide Plan for Hearing
- Discussion on book, Push Out: The Criminalization of Black Girls in School

**Next Meeting:** Since several commissioners are not available on March 5th and we would not have a quorum, we will hold the next meeting on March 12th or March 17th depending on whether Mona is able to secure space for the meeting. Mona Thompson will inform the commission early next week about space availability.

Meeting Adjourned 8:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted, Margaret Adams Co-Chair

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**Time:** 7:00-8:30 PM

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic and State of Emergency, on March 12, 2020, Governor Baker issued an Executive Order Temporarily Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A sec. 20. Pursuant to the Order, public bodies are temporarily relieved from the Open Meeting Law's requirement that meetings be held in public places, open and physically accessible to the public, so long as measures are taken to ensure public access to the bodies' deliberations "through adequate, alternative means."

**Location:** Online

- This meeting will be accessible to the public online via this link: <http://meet.google.com/vur-dvjc-kuq>

● To join by phone, dial (US)+1 507-400-3647 and enter PIN: 859 800 873#

- Public Input
- Commissioners Updates
- Approval of Minutes from February
- Grant Update
- Resource Guide Draft
- Survey
- Commissioner Vacancy
- Discussion on book, Push Out: The Criminalization of Black Girls in School

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### **Massachusetts Eastern Regional Commission on the Status of Women & Girls**

Commissioner Meeting April 2, 2020 7:00pm-8:30pm Zoom

Meeting Facilitator: Margaret Adams, Co-Chair

**Attendees:** Commissioners: Margaret , Tamisha, Toby, Kerry and Michelle

### **Agenda**

1. New Business
2. Survey
  - a. Sharing it to the communities we serve via facebook
  - b. Different languages for the survey
  - c. Mona will upload survey to our facebook page
  - d. Each Commissioner will be assigned a City
3. Survey Result
4. Annual Report
5. Public Hearing
6. Resource Guide
  - a. Michelle- Disability
  - b. Amanda- Immigration
  - c. Mona- Children & Family
  - d. Margret- LGBTQ
  - e. Toby- Health Care
  - f. Tamisha- Domestic Violence
  - g. Kerry- Workforce Development
7. New Member (tentative)

## Notes

1. Designated Town for each Commissioner (Survey)
  - Kerrie will take Revere, Chelsea, Boston
  - Tamisha will take Avon, Stoughton, Canton and Randolph
  - Toby will take Hull, Braintree, Quincy, Weymouth and Cohasset
  - Michelle will take Milton and Brookline
  - Margaret will take Dedham, Westwood, Sharon and Foxboro
  - Commissioners can assist each other
  
2. Resume
  - a. We need to make a decision for a new candidate
  - b. Margaret will let Sasha know who the top pick is
  
3. Virtual Public Meeting
  - a. Do we want to have one or postpone it to the fall?
  - b. Focusing on the next virtual public meeting, Margaret will contact Sasha on how to go about it appropriately.

**Meeting Dates:** Virtual Meeting via Zoom  
May 7th, 2020 @7pm-8:30pm

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**Girls Meeting Agenda Date:** Thursday, May 7th, 2020

**Time:** 7:00-8:30 PM

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic and State of Emergency, on March 12, 2020, Governor Baker issued an Executive Order Temporarily Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A sec. 20. Pursuant to the Order, public bodies are temporarily relieved from the Open Meeting Law's requirement that meetings be held in public places, open and physically accessible to the public, so long as measures are taken to ensure public access to the bodies' deliberations "through adequate, alternative means."

**Location:** Online

- This meeting will be accessible to the public online via this link: <http://meet.google.com/tzi-orxg-reb>
- To join by phone, dial (US)+1 507-400-0035 and enter PIN: 851 380 772#
- Public Input
- Commissioners Updates
- Approval of Minutes from April
- Advocacy Day and Regional Advocacy Day

- Girls Initiative Virtual Listening Sessions
- End of Year Report
- Resource Guide
- Discussion on book, Push Out: The Criminalization of Black Girls in School

Eastern Regional Commission on the Status of Women includes the towns of Avon, Brookline, Canton, Cohasset, Dedham, Foxborough, Holbrook, Hull, Milton, Plainville, Randolph, Sharon, Stoughton, and Westwood, and the cities of Boston, Braintree, Chelsea, Quincy, Revere, Weymouth, and Winthrop.

### Commissioner Meeting

May 5, 2020

7:00pm-8:30pm

Zoom

Meeting Facilitator: Margaret, Co-Chair

### Attendees

**Commissioners:** Margaret, Tamisha, Toby, Kerry, Michelle, Jamica and Amanda

### Agenda

1. New Business
  - a. Black Girl Criminalization (Push Out)
  - b. Different languages for the survey
  - c. Mona will upload survey and upcoming events on MCSW facebook page
  - d. Each Commissioner will be designated a City (Sharing Surveys)
2. Virtual Advocacy Day
3. May 13th, 2020 Kerri and Amanda to attend Girl Advocacy
4. May 27th @ 6:30pm all girl lead advocacy day (middle school, college target audience)
  - a. Get a gift card for participating
  - b. Gift bag for participating
5. Margaret will share report from last year
  - a. State will approve it
  - b. Stationary
  - c. Table cloth
  - d. \$700 postage
  - e. Office Supplies
  - f. Sign
  - g. Vendor (from the State)
6. Grant
  - a. Advocacy Day & Regional Advocacy Day
  - b. Girls Invitation Virtual Listening Session
  - c. End year Report 7/1/20



7. Resource Guide
  - a. Michelle- Disability
  - b. Amanda- Immigration
  - c. Mona- Children & Family
  - d. Margaret- LGBTQ
  - e. Toby- Health Care
  - f. Tamisha- Domestic Violence
  - g. Kerry- Workforce Development
8. New Member (tentative)

## Notes

1. Designated Town for each Commissioner (Survey)
  - a. Kerrie will take Revere, Chelsea, Boston
  - b. Tamisha will take Avon, Stoughton, Canton and Randolph
  - c. Toby will take Hull, Braintree, Quincy, Weymouth and Cohasset
  - d. Michelle will take Milton and Brookline
  - e. Margaret will take Dedham, Westwood, Sharon and Foxboro
  - f. Commissioners can assist each other
2. Resume
  - a. We need to make a decision for a new candidate
  - b. Margaret will let Sasha know who the top pick is
3. Virtual Public Meeting
  - a. Do we want to have one or postpone it to the fall?
  - b. Focusing on the next virtual public meeting, Margaret will contact Sasha on how to go about it appropriately.

## Meeting Dates:

### Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**June 7th, 2020 @7pm-8:30pm**

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**Girls Meeting Agenda Date:** Thursday, June 4th, 2020 **Time:** 7:00-8:30 PM

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic and State of Emergency, on March 12, 2020, Governor Baker issued an Executive Order Temporarily Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A sec. 20. Pursuant to the Order, public bodies are temporarily relieved from the Open Meeting Law's requirement that meetings be held in public places, open and physically accessible to the public, so long as measures are taken to ensure public access to the bodies' deliberations "through adequate, alternative means."

**Location:** Online Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85054293669?pwd=cmNSRnQzeXhrT1Q3dzNOekNwWjRjZz09> Meeting ID:

850 5429 3669 Password: 6YkK0F

Dial by your location +1 646 558 8656 US (New York) Meeting ID:

850 5429 3669 Password: 008884

- Public Input
- Commissioners Updates
- Approval of Minutes from May
- Election of New Officers
- Establish Calendar of Dates for Next Year
- End of Year Report
- Advocacy Day and Regional Advocacy Day Updates
- Girls Initiative Virtual Listening Sessions Updates
- Resource Guide
- Discussion on book, Push Out: The Criminalization of Black Girls in School

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Attendance: Margaret Adams, Kerry Akashian, Mona M. Thompson, Amanda Crabb, Michelle Lanteigne, Jamica Nadina Love, Toby Kamens Rodman, Soumia Aitelhaj

The Commissioners voted unanimously to accept the meeting minutes from May.

Mona Thompson will post the MCSW statement about race and racial justice on the ERCSW social media sites. Kerry Akashian agreed to take the MCSW statement and highlight specific points, send out to commissioners for feedback, set a deadline for feedback, and then Mona Thompson will post on our social media pages.

Mona Thompson reminded all of the commissioners to invite friends and colleagues to the ERCSW social media pages. Commissioners are asked to send Mona a quote, song, and a personal story about the impact of current events so that they can be posted on social media.

The Commission elected the following members for the coming year: Kerry Akashian, Chair Michelle Lanteigne, Co-Chair Amanda Crabb, Treasurer Tamisha Lucien, Clerk

The following dates were decided for the coming year:

- August 17th
- September 21st
- October 19th
- November 16th

- January 25th
- February 22nd
- March 15th
- April 26th
- June 21st (meeting time will be 6:30 PM)

Commissioners were asked to review the end of year report by Friday, June 5, 2020. Commissioners provided an update on the state hearings for women and girls in which they participated in May. They shared common themes that emerged from the girls' and women's testimony during these challenging times.

The group agreed to add content to the resource guide within the next week so we might work on getting it into its final form.

The group discussed briefly the movie and book, Push Out. The criminalization of Black girls in schools is a significantly important issue for us all to consider.

**Agenda for Next Meeting:**

- Commissioner's Update
- Approval of Meeting Minutes for June
- Revisit Goals from Past Year
- Set Goals for Coming Year
- Update on Social Media Outreach during the Summer

Respectfully Submitted, Margaret Adams, Co-Chair Eastern Regional Commission on the Status of Women

## Great Barrington Hearing Notes

October 24, 2019

Attendance: 22 citizens, 1 elected official, 1 media representative

Elected official in attendance: Karen Smith, on behalf of Select Board Member Kate Burke

**Theresa Tatro**- Great Barrington resident: 50 y.o w/ 8 y.o daughter; Girl Scouts leader of 10 girls states that mothers of Girl Scout troops are overburdened. Mothers are expected to “work like we don’t have children, and raise children like we don’t work.” She shared a brief story about her friend’s husband who is willing to pay \$30k for her to be a stay at home mom, but it's not enough; no benefits included. Property value and taxes are high due to out-of-town investors from NY. People who don’t make as much are forced to move further north towards Pittsfield to afford their homes. Concerned that both mom and dad must work in G.B., and that mothers have to take on additional tasks for the family. What do women need? “Women need a break.” The idea she proposed is tax breaks for moms who work and additional benefits for mothers.

**David Rosenburg**- From Alabama currently living in Berkshire County. David stated that the library has a group called Dining for Women, a potluck style dinner for women. The group met yesterday and showed a film- Women, War and Peace. (Response was in addition to first testimony).

**Virginia Sushila**- Midwife: Midwife for over 42 years; studied midwifery since 19 y.o. Pays homage to the native land that we are on. Virginia states that midwives are women practitioners who have a long history of being exiled and oppressed. She recognizes African American and Mexican midwives who have kept midwifery going. We need more midwives; there are shortages of providers who are immersed in the lives of women. Tired of impact of incompetent cultural care in this region. I want to acknowledge women who are impacted by domestic violence; spoke of friend killed by husband. Lack of cultural care in this region. “What would you do if you were black, large, and spoke back and had a white public defender who knew nothing about you? I’m calling people in on how we can help women and professionals who are marginalized.”

**Linda Baxter**- Retired midwife in Berkshire County. Women have no options, so there is no consumer pressure on providers to provide better care. She recommended encouraging the Federally Qualified Health Center to hire more culturally competent providers. EMT and Police do not have adequate training on women’s issues; they are not culturally competent or gender competent. (Response was in addition to second testimony).

**Theresa Tatro**- Lack of diversity amongst first responders. Majority are white, with one black man. (Response was in addition to second testimony).

**Karen Smith**- On behalf of Kate Burke, Select Board Member: Primary issue- no affordable childcare in this area. Affordable housing is a huge issue here; people in Housatonic don’t want affordable housing here. Transportation is a huge issue for people who don’t have it. Barriers to young mothers who can’t get around. Elder Transportation is \$7 to the supermarket or to the doctor’s office. Didn’t know about the hearing, just learned about it. There are a lot of good women in Great Barrington. It’s important that women have a voice. “We don’t receive news from Boston anymore. Everyone thinks the state ends at Springfield.” Women need to be at hearings, but there is a lack of transportation and child care.

**Fiora Caligiuri-Randall** - 16 y.o. daughter of Elaine Caligiuri spoke about the culture in schools and young people. Problem in schools with the classic “mean girl culture”. Isolation happens in the Berkshires because everyone is spread out and no one can get anywhere. People don’t have friends and don’t communicate with others. The same is true at school; everyone stays to themselves. She mentioned Rail Street Youth Project.

**Elaine Caligiuri-** Mother of Fiora. Has worked in Great Barrington for seven years but can't find a place to live here. Landlord was offering to rent to her and then took back the offer, saying that he can make more money renting it as an AirBNB. It's hard to mobilize when there are insecurities (i.e. food insecurities, housing insecurities). So much toxicity in rentals in this area. Rental homes lack proper insulation, have mold, dirt basements, and moisture in the walls. The lower income you are, the more likely you are to live near something toxic. "The brunt is on the children." In support of the local "Stream Team"- environmental science program for youth. (experiential care). We need to teach people more about the ACE's. Need to do programming for 8-10 y.o.

**Nancy Rogers-** Not originally from the Berkshires; lived here for 2 years and is raising son here. Worked over thirty years in the nonprofit sector. States that there are so many opportunities to collaborate; large number of nonprofits in this area. New Chapter of the League of Women Voters that she's a part of and would like to speak further with the MCSW. The League of Women Voters meets at the Stockbridge Library.

**Betlinn Young-Toft-** Moved to Berkshire County 5 or 6 years ago from CT/NY. A single mother of two boys. Can empathize with a feeling of loneliness. Feels like technology is taking away from face to face communication; people just don't know how to talk to each other. People feel more comfortable behind a screen. "How can we teach people to be more connected?" People have misperceptions of reality because of what they see on social media; it's not real. People are friendly here, but they don't want to be your friend.

**Susan Ebitz-** Trustee of Otis Library and Berkshire County Action Group. There are many diverse immigrant populations here, and their needs are exacerbated due to language differences. The needs of the community are great. Transportation is such a great need. "You won't believe the number of people on bicycles at 2am trying to get home."

**General statement made, with agreement from many hearing attendees: Berkshire County does not have internet access, cell phone use, or transportation.**

**Amada Sophia-** New mother, single parent. All the problems that we are having here are happening around the country. "I have native blood running through my veins; they lived off the land here. I found out about this place 5 years ago from my father." (Mother and self are from Manhattan, father is from the Berkshires). There needs to be something done to make it more united. Amada lives like her ancestors in the Berkshires, without electricity and running water - living off the land to be connected to the earth. She spoke of benefits for new mothers in Germany and other parts of Europe; they're getting 70 percent of their salaries for three years. Amada stated that she has three master's degrees and has been working in early childhood education. Women are not supported; families are not supported. It's about how the tax dollars are being used, locally and federally. "There has to be a way to change the way resources are being used. They spent billions of dollars for human cages, that's money that could have gone elsewhere. Educational development starts from the womb to three years old; I don't want to leave my child with someone so that she can just be watched; I want her to learn."

**Beth Fletcher-** Has lived in Sheffield for a year and a half; coming from NY. Looking for projects, something to do to make a difference in the community. Hasn't been able to find any resources or ways to get involved. "If I do find organizations to get involved with, they either don't call me back or they don't provide me with the information that I need." Background is Management Consulting and Strategic Planning. She works with youth to help them make changes and to be empowered; right to self-determination; not for adults to tell them what they need to do.

- *Response:* **Fiora Caligiuri-Randall-** Provided an organization that focuses on youth-oriented and driven change "Youth Leadership Project".

**Emily Thurlow**- Works three part time jobs in addition to a full-time job at Berkshire Record. She states that it's very difficult to sustain a life in Berkshire County; the area is socially barren.

- *Response:* **Dana Cargnie**- works in public relations and would like to be informed of upcoming events held by the MCSW and the Berkshire County CSW. (Response provided after Emily shared that she writes for Berkshire Record).

**Meg Bossong- Chair of Berkshire County CSW** stated Tuesday, November 12<sup>th</sup> is the Berkshire County CSW's next meeting. During this meeting, the Western MA Women's Fund will be reporting out on issues impacting women and girls. (The Berkshire County CSW meets the second Tuesday of every month.) BCCSW focus of 2019 was on women who have been incarcerated from Berkshire County and sent to different parts of the region and other counties to serve their time; leaving them disconnected from their families, supports, and community.

## Springfield Hearing Notes

February 20, 2020

Attendance: 20 citizens, 1 elected official

Elected officials present: Kateri Walsh, City Councilor

### **Testimony**

**Maria From Chicopee** - Not one female present on the Chicopee Council. Looked for bill regarding female representation, and there isn't one. Every elementary school in Chicopee is at least 50 years old, and it's failing in building upkeep. School days have been cancelled because of the heat; the building can't accommodate air conditioners. Found a regulation regarding temperatures in rooms that house children- reached out to superintendent and did not receive a response.

- **(Jean Cotter Fox)** Have you reached out to the School Committee? Yes, has reached out to the School Council- no one on the board has had a child in the schools in years, and they don't seem to care. "If you don't have a child in the school, it doesn't impact you." The response she received is that they are working on adding a cooling system into their budget over the next five years.
- **(Audrey Hall- suggestion)** Outreach to the Health Department and the Board of Health regarding the issues, and using the data/regulations (DOE Regulations). You can make the violations more public.

**Lizzy Ortiz**- works at Mercy Medical with homeless individuals. Discouraged about the lack of: affordable housing, workforce development training, resources, and affordable daycare. Had appx. 105 individuals and families that are homeless. Data collected during the Point in Time Count conducted on January 30, 2020.

- **(Audrey Hall)** What do you think are the contributors to the increase in homelessness?
  - I don't think there is any one contributor.
- **(Phyllis Smith)** Shared that the Black and Latino Legislative Caucus has a Bill, H1288- Act relative to housing reform

**Raven Steed from Young Women Advisory Council and a student at Central High**- The Superintendent says that students have access to free menstrual products, but students are being charged \$1.00 for a pad or tampon. Students have to go to the main office or the nurse to get sanitary products.

- There are bills in place, but nothing into law as of yet. The MCSW is S1274/H1959- An Act to increase access to menstrual products
- **Stephanie Steed (Raven's mother)**- The machines are always broken in the school because the students always break them.
- **LJ (Colleague of Stephanie Steed and HFCSWG Commissioner)**- Noted that the nurse or the teachers were paying out of pocket for pads (can't provide tampons for religious reasons).
- They said they were charging students because students were abusing the privilege and taking pads to make it through the weekend because they weren't able to afford them.
- **(Shaitia Spruell)** School Council only allows public speak out twice a year

**Zonta International Representatives (District 1)** - Support Senate Act to end child marriages. Concerned that MA allows youth under the age of 18 to marry adult men. Married minors do not have the legal rights of adults. Minors can't access the legal tools necessary, and they essentially lose their voice. Judges do not have any guidelines at all regarding these cases because they are considered "special cases".

- MCSW Legislative and Policy Committee is working with Free at Last and the Senate Committee. The House will not bring it to a vote. Senator Chandler and Rep. Kahn have been working hard on this Bill.

**Dawn DiStafano from HCCSW and Businesses Against Human Trafficking**- Businesses take a pledge to update HR policies and train employees. Over 300 active human trafficking cases open, majority of them are with girls

under the age of 12. Sex is being purchased at 2pm (high point during the day); this is happening during the work day. Hotel staff in Springfield are trained to pick up on trends of patrons, and to notify the State Police immediately.

**Alycia Gay from Women's Fund of Western MA-** Working with UMass to research why women are not in the workforce in Springfield and Orange. Creating focus groups and surveys to find out why women don't want to enter the workforce. Thriving in the Springfield area but struggling in Orange due to lack of transportation and internet access.

- **(Phyllis Smith)** Are you looking at demographics from an age perspective?
  - Does not recall it coming up during their meeting, but will add it to the notes to address with the Committee.
- **(Phyllis Smith shared that age discrimination impacts older folks)**
- **Pattie Hallberg** shared that transportation is always a barrier in the West (Western, MA).
- **(Mary-dith Tuitt suggested )** U.S. Women Department of Labor was offering funding- look into this, as there may be grants that the organization can apply for.
- **(Nina Kimball)** - asked about timeline
  - UMASS is waiting for IRB approval to conduct research. They will launch program from there.

**LaConia Fennel from Springfield Community-Based Doulas-** Provide nonmedical support to mothers in an effort to decrease mortality rates. They are in the East Forest Branch Library twice a month. Springfield has twice the mortality rate of the state as a whole. They are currently seeking funding and doing outreach.

- **(Audrey Hall)** Both bills will provide medicare coverage for out of hospital births: H.1182 and H1948



## Weymouth Hearing Notes

November 21, 2019

### **Testimony**

**Rep. James Murphy** - MCSW success stories—Pregnancy Fairness, Family Medical Leave Act, Act Establishing three Regional Commissions—gives congrats to us for our successes.

19-20 priorities—Campaign Funds for Childcare, Joan Meschino and Pat O'Connor—also supports the ideas. But important to continue to have discussions to bring ideas to the legislators and put into the bills that are implemented. Vested interest—three year old daughter and one on the way. This year he is chairman of Financial Services. A lot of work to do before the end of the session; wants to be a resource for the Commission. Nina explains the Campaign Funds for Childcare Act. Suggests that men's rooms should have changing tables.

Commissioners introduce themselves.

**Rep. Meschino: Represents Hull, Hingham, and Cohasset** - Thanks the commission for our work around gender equity and parity and women and children. Proud as a freshman rep to vote for contraceptive care and Pregnant Worker Fairness Act, new regional commission including in her Plymouth district. Commission has been an important partner in Campaign Funds for Childcare—now expanded to family care including aging parents. We need to be thoughtful and intentional about building equity into our system and remove barriers to allow campaign funds to be expended including on childcare. A small legislative commission will work to recommend it for childcare and family care. Acknowledges that childcare is a professional expense that unlocks potential for women to do what they need to campaign.

**Lisa Belmarch, Weymouth School Committee Chair** - Also mom, gov employee, lawyer. Weymouth is an exciting place to be right now, particularly due to efforts of women. New middle school will be built that will have big impact on community. First override ever to fund the school, first new school in decade. Universal free full day kindergarten next year—equitable footing, huge financial impact on Weymouth families. Educating entire town on environmental impacts of potential compressor station. All of this due to the force of women of Weymouth and their efforts moving these projects. This is happening on social media, playgrounds, town events—non-traditional government communications methods. We don't do enough to hear women or other people's voices who can't fit into rigid evening meeting format, which are often at the same time as family responsibilities, and also can be intimidating. Then decisions are made without those voices and without full diverse opinions. Too many decisions made by men in backroom meetings, restaurants, golf courses, etc. We need to be more inclusive and available—childcare at meetings, social media surveys? How can our meeting requirements allow more voices to be heard?

- **Mary-dith** asks about preschool.
- There is an early childhood education center by pay or on a sliding scale. Karis and the Plymouth commission got budget to spend on childcare at the hearing. Carrie Palazzo is here as well, a new school committee member. They have talked about having the students at the high school who need community service hours to provide childcare. Lisa feels empowered to know that women will come up.

**Joanne Golden: has lived in Weymouth for 2 years, 17 years in Quincy, before then in Marshfield**- Here representing Women's Bar Association to talk about bill to end female genital mutilation. This group has been working on this bill for three legislative sessions—six years. Each time has been modified based on feedback. Before the very busy joint judicial committee. Thanks the commission for the support on this as our priority legislation. FGMC bill establishes a definition of what FGMC is —partial removal of genitals, clitoris, labia, sew up genitals—causes problems with urination, menstruation, sex, childbirth. Can lead to scarring, pain,

problems. It is not the same as male circumcision. The bill only covers children, does not cover women. Support women's rights to make own decisions. Had a hearing recently. When they started, there were 19 states banning FGM. Now there are 35. Worry is that Massachusetts will be a destination for FGM as one of only 15.

- **Audrey:** why is it not getting traction? Is it a cultural thing?

- Yes, it can be in African cultures, but there are also white, Christian Americans who do this. But there is no data. The law would allow for collection of data.

**Tricia Powers** - Learned a lot about the law that she wishes she never had to learn, especially in employment law. Looking at NDAs and confidentiality agreements. New York, New Jersey, CA: retaliation laws for sexual harassment, wage. We have non-competes, NDAs, forced arbitration—confidentiality clauses about pay. There's no teeth to any of these laws. Wage theft laws are treble damages. Because of her NDA, took her 2.5 years to get through the court system. Has a non-compete, NDA, etc. Non-compete law that was just passed is an improvement but still not enough. Tried to apply for a part time job, asked to sign a non-compete for two years and 75 mile radius, when explained the law to him (it was against the law), she was told good luck. It is really hard for her even as a resourced white woman, but low-wage, folks of color have it much worse. Wage Theft bill passed three times in the Senate, House won't vote on it. New Leader of the Ways and Means committee. As to non-compete laws, there are no teeth to the current law. Tortious interference—when a company is filing lawsuits, there's no one looking to see if there's a trend. Need a faster process to declare a non-compete overbroad or unenforceable. Stifling ordinary competition. Women are more likely to sign this.

- **Nina:** power disparities between employers and female employees. The process of “private attorneys general” is not workable for many employees. There's not really a choice as to non-competes.
- **Tricia:** if you have forced arbitration, can't even get an attorney to call you back. Tricia suggests you should need more proof to file a tortious interference claim. Old bosses are calling new bosses and getting people fired over unenforceable non-competes.

**Karis North, Chair from the Plymouth Regional Commission** - Lives in Hull. Applied to regional commission at advice of Rep. Meschino. Meet the second Saturday of every month at Plymouth Public Library at 10. Legislative subcommittee and event subcommittee. Looking at priority legislation. Going to hold a listening session at a local high school on girls. Holding a legislative tea. Also looking at trying to do wage negotiation training. On social media.

**Jordan Penny** - Works for South Shore Resource and Advocacy Center. Works in Hingham District Court and has been in victims' services for about six years. Although there have been some amendments to DV laws, there is more work to be done. Risk of homicide in DV relationship is astronomical. If an offender's license to carry has lapsed, there is no criminal offense. Work to be done to close loopholes. More accountability in holding offenders who offend while out on promise to appear. The DA may not have an idea of how to evaluate dangerousness without past offenses reported. High risk committee is getting started again. Patricia suggests getting district court judges trained on high risk cases. Carolyn reports on Plymouth spring listening session reports on effects of domestic violence. Spoke to former rep to start a high risk victims' task force, modeled after opioid task force. 24 DV homicides in Massachusetts. 13 DV homicides in MA in October.

Audrey asks everyone to take the priority legislation with them  
Nina discusses the Girls' Initiative

**Rep. Murphy** - process every year, 5,000 bills filed. Reps don't know about all the bills. It's important to have bills and issues brought to their attention. Small issues you would never think about—like how homeowner's insurance will not pay out for intentional fires even if there's a DV issue. Now working on a carveout. Is there a report on the hearings?

- Mary-dith: Yes—the annual report. Also looking at taking what we’ve learned from the hearings and potentially writing our own legislation. Rep. Murphy would be happy to help with drafting.

**Rep. Meschino** states that one of our strength is grassroots advocacy and working with coalition. She encourages us to work on drafting, especially working with the Women’s Caucus.

**Rep. Murphy** suggests a South Shore coalition budget meeting to discuss the commission budget.

Rep. Murphy would like more communications on 1-10 priority bills. And also see one place with our accomplishments. Suggests having a release with fanfare with the results of our meetings and hearings. Nina suggests we might have a briefing on our priorities. Rep. Meschino suggests developing relationships with legislators’ aides.

**Tricia:** Multilevel marketing and gig economies where fees are charged on gross receipts. No one can understand how to get paid. Would be good if Massachusetts could get a franchise law or a “business opportunity rule.” You should be able to understand how you get paid.

**Pascale Burga, Town Councillor** - Knows first-hand what it was like to not have child care while campaigning. And supports the bill. As a mother of a daughter who is 11, very excited about the girls’ initiative—excited for her daughter to be a leader. A big difference between her 24 year old son and 11 year old daughter, not as much opportunities in girls’ sports, scouting. She had been told that boys are better than girls because girls cannot be priests. Excited for emerging leaders to come to the girls summit. Military spouse.

**Rep. Murphy:** Weymouth is the home of Abigail Adams.

Mary-dith discusses Deborah Samson bill—to recognize her in the state house

**Elizabeth Foster-Nolan:** We need to better advertise our events through coalitions and their newsletters, etc.

**Andre Gray** - Important to figure out how to get men to listen. It may be daunting for some men to come into a room for women. How to make spaces for men to listen or speak on our issues? . He wants to hear what he can do. He wants to hear more from us. Seminars or workshops for dads. He would like to have a speaker at his religious organization. He can contact us to have a visit from our speaker’s bureau.

## COVID-19 Virtual Hearing Notes

April 2, 2020

Hearing conducted virtually with more than 100 attendees; written testimony collected before and after hearing; survey response collected via social media and email

Chair Nina Kimball opening remarks.

Vice Chair Denella Clark remarks, introduction of Chair of Action Committee Audrey Hall and commissioner Shaitia Spruell

Commissioner Shaitia Spruell, remarks regarding logistics

Chair Kimball, introduction of commissioners

Dr. Tonisha Pinckney, Worcester Regional Commissioner - concerns about mental illness and domestic violence exacerbated during COVID-19 quarantine. Idea that "home is not always the safest place." Urging awareness, funding for shelters, expansion of mental health treatment.

Amanda Shepard- Addressing education about Social Reproduction and the Labour of Women during COVID-19 crisis.

Amy Clarke- What accommodations, changes are being looked at for high school seniors (class of 2020) to complete their school year, transcripts, etc.

Alexandra Kennedy- Please discuss homeschooling support and the mental health impact of self-isolation.

Kim Comatas- People with uteruses are unable to continue their birth control if it requires an office visit like Depo shot does. People with uteruses are unable to get hormonal birth control for the first time without a visit to a doctor. Allowing for pleasurable experiences and being bored can come with the consequence of pregnancy. They could also be at home for a very long time with someone who is possibly an abuser or someone who does not respect their boundaries. This can be very traumatic without access to birth control during the shut in.

Deb Cleveland- Anything being done to help prostitutes?

Nicole Albert- The crisis amplified women's issues. Those that are suffering domestic violence, that are old, those that lost their kids, financial support. It is becoming harder for women to survive, pay bills, and to have to go to different pantries.

Phyllis Morrison- PPE

Margot Parot - As a Law Professor teaching Elder Law, I have focused on the effects of COVID-19 on seniors. Isolation has become a major issue for seniors, leading to poor physical and mental health outcomes.

Natalia Frois- There are limited resources available for US citizens at this time to survive and be up to date with bills, my family income has dropped to 1/2. Most of my clients are undocumented immigrants and they have practically no resource to access to keep their family needs in the daily bases. I feel we don't have much to support our community, especially the ones on the margin of poverty and minorities; they are falling

through the cracks and not being supported as much. About underprivileged women's difficulties through Coronavirus pandemic.

Aubrey Hartnett- This is so challenging! I was laid off, am trying to look for work, and grateful I have family in the area to help with childcare as I do so. I know I am lucky.

Lynn Masterman- Girls and young women are feeling isolated and overwhelmed. We are trying to connect to our groups whose programming has been disrupted by COVID-19. We are concerned that so much funding for nonprofits is being directed to food and shelter (which is of course critical) but resources for other types of services are drying up. Now is not the time to abandon girls who need this support more than ever. Thank you.

Sue Mynttinen- I am worried about the amount of posts I see about women and wine, joking or otherwise, while they are homeschooling children.

Gail Lyonnais- Working at home requires discipline and is challenging, but once the discipline is acquired and as the challenges slowly decrease, it is manageable. We should always be ready for change as change is inevitable.

Elizabeth Lehr- Unseen personnel in hospitals, medical laboratory technicians, PT, OT, cleaners, etc. are predominantly women working under high risk conditions and going home to families. The lack of protective gear for them puts them in an untenable position - act for the public good or act for their family and themselves. Can we please at least hear some recognition for all of them, men included?

Janice Mirabassi- How are domestic violence programs helping people in quarantine - especially if they are secluded with their abuser.

Susan Lee- I am concerned about female low-wage workers - I know several people who are teacher's aides who have been laid off. The uncertainty is very hard for them. Very few savings because they are paid so minimally, hard to maintain health insurance. I am also concerned about victims of domestic violence, very hard to be confined at home in an abusive situation, out of touch with coworkers, etc.

Amy Blanchette- Mental health and Domestic Violence are two of my biggest concerns in addition to the many women who have lost their jobs during this crisis and are struggling to pay their rent and student loans. There is little to no relief for college students, especially in this stimulus package.

Robin Robinson- 1) Address how Massachusetts state government can support women-owned small businesses in rural areas in terms of their economic viability, beyond unemployment payouts. 2) Address coordination of efforts to support women and girls who experience gender-based violence, especially in their homes where many are now confined.

Michelle Long- Our community at the Cambridge Women's Center is definitely affected by COVID-19. Our Director Jessye Kass has been taking calls from women and providing emotional support and resource referrals since our Center closed on March 17th. Though our Center is closed, our Helpline and Business line remain open and will officially launch on Monday, April 6th, staffed by remote volunteers. Additionally, our April calendar of remote support groups, workshops, yoga, meditation, and reiki courses are now posted on our website: [www.cambridgewomenscenter.org](http://www.cambridgewomenscenter.org).

Sunny Daily- Home birth midwife, doula, and director of nonprofit offering family planning, WIC, and young parents support programs.

Jaspreet Mahal- Juggling between shared households and child custody with divorced spouse.

Sharon V Jones- Interested in knowing how women and girls are being treated during this time.

Marianela Rivera- Domestic Violence is on the rise. Children without access to tech and special needs are being left behind from DESE's push for online remote instruction.

Sharon Schiffer- COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting mothers because they are forced to caretake and work at the same time.

Kelli-beth Vecchione- The social isolation that our Little Sisters are facing during this time is extreme. There is a critical need for them to be able to connect emotionally while they are unable to connect socially.

Kristen Wessels- The stay at home advisory often forces some women and girls to be trapped with their perpetrators and makes safety planning more difficult as well as options are now more limited. Also, services become much harder to access, and it can be hard to find a private place for survivors to do remote counseling.

Rachel Roth- I would like the Commission to look into the following areas and raise them with the Legislature: 1) How are families involved with the child welfare system being treated during the pandemic? Is the timeline for termination of parental rights under ASFA being extended, given that people are not able to have visits or receive supportive services because we are required to stay home? 2) What steps are being taken to release women and girls from prison, jail, youth detention, or group foster homes? Public health experts recommend releasing people. Are any special provisions being implemented for parents who are incarcerated? For example, is the Primary Caretakers Act being extended retroactively or to people who are being arrested now as part of pretrial decision making?

Felicia Harvey- I would like to ask where small businesses can get loans at this time?

Marianne Winters- I will provide written testimony on needs of survivors of DV living in close quarters with abusers and the needs of emergency shelter guests in congregate facilities.

Virginia Meany- Support the policies that support women and families like Equal Pay, Paid Sick Leave, health care for all, end to homelessness.

Stephanie Deeley- I hope that we can cover the issues victims of domestic violence are experiencing being tied down in their homes with their abuser.

P. Sampson- Concerned about adult children turning 26 this year. Will now be off parents' insurance with limited job prospects.

Leslie Credle- No new prisons to be built in MA. Free women held pre-trial, sick and with health problems who are incarcerated during the pandemic. De-fund a percentage of the DOC budget and re- invest the money into the community for alternatives to incarceration.

Dawne Young- Incarcerated loved ones.

Nancy Rosenblum- How are incarcerated women faring? Many are dependent on "jailcare" for their healthcare and I worry what will happen to them. Also, concerned re: increase in intimate partner violence with all of us sheltering in place.

Maglais Troncoso- The condition of domestic workers: those who care about our family are confronting real challenges - lack of jobs, food, money, behind rent, we desperately need support for home care workers. The most vulnerable are impacted by this crisis.

Austin Frizzell- As an MPH and concerned community member, I believe we have an imperative to include the release of incarcerated women in prisons and jails as an essential part of the public health response to COVID-19. This especially includes elderly women serving life sentences and others with health concerns.

Carol Prone- I think they are doing well now. Just like to hear future plans. Daughter-in-law pregnant with first child, so concerned.

Kelly Love- I'm most worried about women and girls who are in homes with abusers, who may not know that they have resources available to stay safe.

Chloe Rothman- keeping girls/women safe during this time. Keeping girls/women connected and with access to resources during this time.

Charmaine Arthur- Women and girls are dealing with increased violence during this time. We need support. They need mental health support.

Sharon Scott- Additional stressors on Black women's health & crippling effects on the household...

Therese Fitzgerald- We need gender-specific programming for the economic empowerment of low-income girls and young women in Massachusetts.

Lyndon Vincent- The effect of COVID-19 has serious traumatic effects on the entire community.

Chien-Chi Huang- Asian Americans are encountering racism due to Covid-19 and it is impacting our mental health - people are afraid, anxious and in distress!

Brittany Gaetano- I am interested in learning more about the needs of women and girls during this time so that we can better serve our Boston girls.

Calvena DeVoe- That our woman and incarcerated loved ones deserve to live; they are suffering behind the walls, that they need to be released immediately, that we are concerned for our loved ones' wellbeing, that we support them, that we care about them, that they have love on the outside - they're not safe inside the cages. They are lacking supplies, living in horrid situations, being abused...#FREEHER #FREETHEMALL #RELEASEOURPEOPLE #FREEOURFAMILIES

Ivanna Solano- I am interested in also discussing ways in which we can support women and girls during this pandemic.

Stephanie Gonzalez- We need extra attention to domestic violence resources for women and the ability to have women's health clinics open during this time.

Christina Gordon- Only .3% of philanthropic giving in Boston is directed towards women- and girl-serving organizations. The Women's Foundation of Boston created the WFBoston Response Fund for emergency funding for women- and girl-serving nonprofits during this crisis because on all the community websites, there was not one relief fund set up for women and girls, or one that even mentioned women.

Danubia Camargos Silva- This pandemic truly is impacting the lives of the women we serve. Generationally, we have expected that they must figure it out and keep going despite any adversities they endured. This survival mode is at all times very much alive to women who are already functioning on override. How can this pandemic reset the expectations over women in our society? What are the new set of values, beliefs, and expectations that we can instill in society to move our women from survival mode to thriving mode?

Helen McCreedy- I want to attend as a PD of an IHT and TM program to hear testimony from others of what they're experiencing, or hearing being experienced. Definitely concerned about the possibility of increased domestic violence towards women/caregivers at this time.

Ceylan Rowe- I'm concerned about women who are at home with their abusers, women not having access to free menstrual products, food insecurities, and female founders no longer in business, particularly single mothers who do not have another source of income. Thank you.

Em V- We need to do what is possible to protect the most vulnerable in our region.

Elaine Donnelly- Concerns about displacement/discontinuance of non-Covid preventions/treatments. For example, breast cancer screenings stopped at Tufts Medical on Mar 12. The fallout from this pandemic will be far-reaching across a broad range of physical and mental health areas.

Jarrod Chin- What are the challenges and barriers people and their families are facing in accessing healthcare, and what additional support could hospitals provide to people in their communities that they serve?

Kevonna Jones Tandon- Financial Abuse is real. Financial Abuse often accompanies other forms of abuse and continues after a woman leaves a volatile living situation. Financial Abuse during a Pandemic could mean life or death. What is being done to protect and include mothers who may not be able to [qualify to] collect unemployment or stimulus funds? Furthermore, child support that is often the lifeline of stability may not be received or drastically cut due to various circumstances of the times. Additionally, enforcement/courts are closed.

Carmelle Bonhometre- How to find resources for domestic violence survivors?

Irvienne Goldson- Reproductive and sexual health is essential service.

Shanita Jefferson- As a daughter of a currently incarcerated woman serving a life without the possibility of parole, hope is hard to hold onto. My mother has done everything in her power to rehabilitate herself over the last 28 years, she is now a grandmother in her golden years and deserves a second chance to be a great role model in this community. We've suffered generational trauma, with my now 5-year-old experiencing the same shame that I've felt for years. The future could be so bright if you'd free our mommas and I beg you to start with mine, Ms Angelia Jefferson F34801.

Olivia Massie- Right now, more than ever you need to release women who are incarcerated. Incarceration is not safer and never has been. No woman (or person) belongs in prison! Now is the time to divest from prisons and instead invest in our communities. Release people now!! #FreeHer

Mia Roberts- Girls are even more at risk of the negative impacts of the stress and trauma brought about by the COVID-19 environment and are more likely to be overlooked as their caregivers grapple with concerns about unemployment, health, and the health of their elder members in their family. Our girls and their families need



us more than ever before to help ensure that girls are resilient, now and in the future. It's important that the state continue to fund the vital programs that support the girls of the Commonwealth.

Deborah Re, President and CEO of Big Sister Association of Greater Boston - It is critical that the state ensure continued funding to put a caring adult in the lives of girls. Research shows that girls are more vulnerable to adverse childhood experiences that undermine their self-confidence and self-worth. This translates into higher rates of anxiety, depression, and opting out of opportunities for education, career advancement, and financial stability. The stress related to the COVID-19 environment will exaggerate these negative effects. The Commonwealth has been and must continue to be at the forefront of promoting girl's development, who in turn will advance the quality of life for all of us.

Ayanna Aubourg- How they are including incarcerated women and girls in the pandemic response to COVID?

Barbara Jarosz- Any separation of a mother with a child goes against every law of nature, and the consequences from such a separation from incarceration is irreversible on mother and child.

Vanessa P- I do agree that women should be paid the same as men. Since many women often/usually do most of the housework and childcare, as well as work, they need a higher salary. Today, there are more examples of women being the main or higher wage earner.

Lauren McCann- WE have JOBS!!

Fabian Pierre- Mental illness has been prominent in our communities for a very long time. We have experienced many traumas and generational struggles that lead some of us to not function as your average individual would, and many of us tend to make mistakes, mistakes that we should not be punished for because of behavior resulting from trauma. For years, I have watched my sister fight demons, and when she gets to the end of her rope rather than being offered help or being asked why? What is going on with you? She is in turn punished with court ordered probations, fines, verbal abuse from our police officers, evictions, and many times has even faced homelessness with her daughter. This is not just the story of my sister - this is the story of many women in my community and in my family. In our many conversations, she has expressed her hopes and wishes to just be able to have a chance to go to school, work, be able to consistently provide for her daughter while having a stable roof over their heads, which, ideally, everyone wants. It's known that the DOC is planning on opening a new 50 Million dollars woman's prison at Bay state with capital bond money. This is unethical and immoral. Rather than build an additional cage to put our people in, we should redirect those resources and put programs, developmental centers, and therapists - into our community's resources we truly need to be able to thrive as a whole. In addition to all this, Covid-19 has become a threat to our loved ones on the inside. It would be truly impossible to follow the recommended health guidelines to prevent getting Covid-19 as an incarcerated woman, let alone being an incarcerated woman with underlying health conditions. During this time, we need our grandmothers, mothers and sisters back home. and we need to invest in re-imagining our communities. #FreeHer Thank you, Fay Gelin

Rebecca Donham- How funders can help.

Hema Sarand-Sieminski- Janedoe.org is a resource to the Commission and Commonwealth.

Cassandra Ben-Sah, Families for Justice as Healing and Massachusetts Against Solitary Confinement - one out of eight women in Massachusetts is serving a life sentence in prison. Health problems among incarcerated women but no efforts to decarcerate. Urged no additional construction of prisons.

Dr. Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson, Director of Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy - joint testimony with Massachusetts Women of Color Coalition, highlighting vulnerability of low-income women and women of color to effects of COVID-19. Need to acknowledge the role of gender and racial bias in the spread of the pandemic.

Danielle Piskadlo, Executive Director of Budget Buddies - women leaving transitional housing/shelters due to health concerns, unclear where they're going. People relied on public schools for childcare and healthy meals. Lack of support for single mothers now at home with children. Lack of internet/technology access, leading to lack of reliable financial information and specifically the spread of misinformation.

Virginia Sushila - midwife from the Berkshires. Question about whether hospitals are developing plans for off-site birthing and providing necessary beds. Small influx of New Yorkers into the maternity system in Western Mass. Issues with getting medication to women giving birth because anesthesiologists are tied up with COVID patients. Would like to see strategic planning focusing on the needs of pregnant women. Concern about isolation among new mothers.

Andrea James, Founder and Executive Director of Families for Justice as Healing; Executive Director of National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls - encouraged decarceration and awareness of impact of COVID-19 on incarcerated women.

J Monroe - female entrepreneur from Northborough, encouraged grants and financial support for female-owned businesses. Discussed impact on women whose businesses have had to close, especially single mothers.

#### *Written Testimony*

Rosalie Girard, Executive Director of Berkshire Nursing Families: outlined new mothers' difficulty in accessing lactation services and combatting already-prevalent feelings of isolation. Presented adjustments to delivery of services during COVID-19, including phone consultations and procedures for in-person consultations when necessary. Additionally outlined virtual offerings for children and families.

Deborah Re, President and CEO, Big Sister Association of Greater Boston: submitted testimony regarding the importance of maintaining emotional connection during social distancing. Discussed prevalence and effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and importance of mentorship and connection in preventing their effects. Urged the Commonwealth to continue funding mentorship programs.

Joneisha James, representing Families for Justice as Healing and National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls: presented statistics regarding women's incarceration within the Commonwealth. Opposed DOC's plan to build a \$50 million prison at Bay State. Presented fears regarding the potential impact of the pandemic on incarcerated women and urged decarceration as an appropriate public health response.

Nicole Pearlstein, NE Endometriosis Advocate: submitted testimony to bring attention to impacts of endometriosis. Discussed the importance of educating school nurses to address delays in diagnosis. Asked the Commission to help promote such educational programs.

Wendy Foxmyn: urging passage of legislation to support paid spousal elder care.

Erin Johnson: urged removal of the statute of limitations on rape and sexual assault charges. Discussed barriers to reporting, including the long-lasting trauma and potential threats from perpetrators that survivors face.

Stacey Borden, New Beginnings Reentry Services: formerly incarcerated woman, highlighted difficulty of social distancing for currently incarcerated women and heightened concerns for those with pre-existing conditions. Offered assistance for incarcerated women who are released through Kimya's House residential home.

Julie Kabukanyi, Executive Director of Congolese-American Women Empowerment and Leadership: raised concern about inability to access health care and subsequent vulnerability to COVID-19 among African immigrant women who do not speak English. Pointed to three factors making this group more vulnerable, including (1) misinformation and myths from social media; (2) lack of financial resources due to employment termination; and (3) issues within the immigration system. Urged increased focus on health equity.

Testimony from YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts, Girls Exclusive Program: communicated needs expressed by girls within the program and their families, including support with childcare and items such as toilet paper. Also communicated girls' difficulties in adequately taking in information while in school online.

Marianne Winters, Executive Director of Safe Passage: relayed concerns from survivors of domestic violence. COVID-19 being "weaponized" by abusers (providing misinformation, withholding resources, etc.). Request for single-residence facilities to be made available for survivors.

Closing remarks by Audrey Hall

## Advocacy Day 2020 and Community Meetings - Executive Summary & Report

### Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women Advocacy Day and Follow-Up Community Meetings Executive Summary and Report

#### Executive Summary

- Advocacy Day May 13, 2020 held virtually
- Advocacy Day follow up: Community meetings across the state
- Attended by Elected officials, Commissioners, and Community members

#### Planning:

- Due to COVID-19, the annual MCSW Advocacy Day became a virtual event. As a follow up, Community Meetings were held across the state to understand how the pandemic is affecting women and girls and how advocacy can continue in these challenging times.

#### Meetings:

- Greater Boston (May 13th @7)
- Central Mass (May 14th @ 12)
- Western Mass (May 14th @ 5)
- South Shore, South Coast, Cape Cod and Islands (May 14th @7)
- North Shore (May 15th @ 12)

#### Key Findings in the Following Categories:

- Economic impact
- Health care
- Mental Health
- Essential Workers
- Domestic Violence
- Child Care/Education
- Food Insecurity
- Housing
- Gender/Racial Disparities
- Unemployment

#### Next Steps:

- Promote/work on legislation and policy to aid women and girls during these challenging times

#### Report

##### *What did we do, and why did we do it?*

With COVID-19, the Commission's annual Advocacy Day event was changed to a virtual event held on May 13, 2020. Although not the same, the event was still successful with Commissioners across the state advocating

for certain COVID-19 legislation to aid women and girls during these hard times. Given the pandemic, Advocacy Day was mainly focused on COVID-19 related legislation.

Advocacy Day, May 13, 2020:

Participation in Advocacy Day was approximately 100 people.

The first part of the program consisted of commissioners sharing information about the Commission's survey and report on experiences of women during COVID-19 and legislative initiatives growing out of information we learned from our virtual hearing and survey as contained in our Report.

The second part of Advocacy Day consisted of social media outreach through participation in Twitter storm:

- 2,538 organic impressions (number of times users saw the tweet on Twitter).
- Engagement consisted of partner organizations and Regional Commissions.
  - Michelle Keith (Tweeted throughout the hour!)
  - Mary Bridget Burns (Worcester County CSW)
  - Plymouth County Commission on the Status of Women
  - Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women
- Partner Organizations:
  - YWCA Southeastern MA
  - Women's Fund SEMA
  - Early Education for All (with the Director of research and policy Titus DosRemedios engaging on both his personal and early ed page)
  - Screw The Hierarchy
  - Dignity At Work
  - End Workplace Abuse Now
- Legislator Participation
  - Senator Walter Timilty (reposted report and a pre written tweet from ad day toolkit)
  - Senator Pat Jehlen (thanked MCSW for their work for women and girls in MA, reposted report)
- Commissioner Participation:
  - Shaitia Spruell
  - Jean Fox
- Notables:
  - Paul DePalo for Governor's Council
- Other Commissioners, including MCSW Chair Nina Kimball, sent emails to Legislators advocating for legislation that addresses issues outlined in our Report

## Community Meetings: May 13-15, 2020

As a follow up to Advocacy Day, MCSW held Community Meetings around the state in order to hear from communities across the state to find out how women and girls in each region are faring during the pandemic in order to help inform legislators how to respond to issues in their communities. These meetings were intended to replace the small group discussions and in person visits to legislators that typically occur during Advocacy Day. The MCSW held five of these virtual meetings on GoToMeeting: Western Mass, Central Mass, South Shore/South Coast/Cape Cod and Islands, North Shore, and Greater Boston. These meetings were held between May 13th and May 15th, at different times of the day. These meetings included State-wide and Regional Commissioners, elected officials, and community members in order to foster an open conversation about what is happening on the ground and the work to be done regarding the needs of the women of the Commonwealth. Participation ranged from 2 to 28 people.

### *What did we learn?*

We learned that the issues we identified in the MCSW's COVID-19 Report issued in April are still the same issues that women and girls are facing today. The main issues that were shared across all Community Meetings include, but are not limited to: economic impact of the pandemic, health care, mental health, issues affecting essential workers, increase in domestic violence, child care/education issues, food insecurity, housing, gender/racial disparities, and unemployment. We also learned of different legislation Commissioners and elected officials are advocating for. Here are some of the legislative initiatives that were discussed and supported as well as some of the comments on the major issues that are happening in these communities (from the Community Meetings notes):

- Education on internet and broadband based - children in the area do not have access - educational equity issue.
- The Senate just passed data collection legislation regarding gathering information on the racial impact and treatment of COVID. Discrepancies in access to education because of COVID.
- DA domestic violence task force has been active in the region.
- H1959 menstrual products in schools, shelters, and prisons. Access to these health products should be a given, but it is not.
- Debra Falzoi: "I've been pushing workplace abuse legislation, which affects women and people of color at high rates due to bias. It's been illuminated as an issue with health care workers who speak up about safety, grocery workers wanting basic protections, and warehouse workers, but will also be a huge concern when offices open back up...There's S.1072, but we're introducing a stronger bill next session called the Dignity At Work Act: [DignityAtWorkAct.org](http://DignityAtWorkAct.org)."
- Heather Panahi: "Please Support the Healthy Youth Act Ensuring medically accurate and LGBTQ-friendly sex education curriculum is taught!"
- Marianne Fleckner: "Hello all, noticing the time we might not get to talking about this: regarding childcare, if you know of anyone who has been having money deducted from their pay for a "Dependent Care Assistance Program, (DCAP), the closure of a day care IS considered a pre-qualifying event and you can ask your employer to stop the deductions for the remainder of the time your daycare provider is closed. This isn't advertised too much. Also, the "Extended Family Medical Leave Act, (EFMLA), if your employer is 500 employees or less or work for a government entity, you can apply for the EFMLA which gives you 10 weeks of paid leave at 2/3 your regular pay if you can not work due to your child's daycare or school closure. This comes after the 2 weeks of 2/3 pay using the Emergency Paid Leave Act (EPLA)."
- Abby Ebbeson: "Worcester Addresses Childhood Trauma has a recorded zoom trauma training series we can share. The YW did a great one on Domestic Violence."

- Kerry Akashian: “BPS is also providing about \$28 via ebt as of next week. To every BPS student. This is important info that needs to be shared.”
- Erical Scott: “There are lines at the food pantries like we’ve never seen them before.”
- Jordan Pouliot: Using tag lines like “Periods don’t stop during COVID-19,” they are organizing and distributing free menstrual products, biodegradable pads and tampons through a program on the Southshore, and supporting the free menstrual product bill.
- Anna Noble Dunphy: “Childcare is a huge issue. We don’t expect schools to reopen in the way they used to. As a parent of a toddler, I need childcare to be able to return to work, and cannot stay employed if I have to choose between taking care of children and work. If the schools reopen with a split day or week, that won’t allow me to return to a 40-hour workweek.”
- Karis North: “Access to WiFi is a big problem. Kids have been given hotspots and devices in some areas of the state whose school districts have more resources, but not as much in Plymouth County, and with the libraries closed, many kids don’t have access to the internet and are falling behind in school. Libraries are not considered essential services and so they are not available to provide internet and computers.”
- Karis North: “We are seeing a huge burden on women as caregivers, supporters, parents, now teachers, now healthcare providers and taking care of seniors. The burden on women is heaviest. Women are being stretched longer and harder.”

#### Facilitators and Elected Officials Participating in Community Meetings:

##### Western Mass:

- Facilitator(s): State Commissioners > Liz Friedman and Shaitia Spruell, Regional Commissioners > Dawn Distefano - Hampden, Denise Brown - Hampshire,
- Elected official attendees: Rep. Mindy Domb, Sen. Adam Hinds, Rep. Natalie Blais
- Women’s commission attendees: Tara Wallace (Hampden), Gabrielle ? (Hampden), Michelle Goncalves (Hampden), Pattie Hallberg (Hampden)
- Main issues discussed: economic impact, health care, domestic violence, essential workers, decarceration

##### Central Mass:

- Facilitator(s):
  - State Commissioners: Audrey Hall, Ruth Bramson
  - Regional Commissioners: Heather Panahi - Metrowest, Tonisha Pinckney - Worcester
- Elected official attendees: Rep. Maria Duame Robinson, Susan Nichols from Senator President Spilka’s office
- Main issues discussed: mental health, substance abuse, health care, economic impact, racial discrimination, child care/education

##### South Shore, South Coast, Cape Cod and the Islands:

- Facilitator(s):
  - State Commissioners: Nina Kimball, Jean Fox
  - Regional Commissioners: Michelle Keith - Bristol, Anna Dunphy, Lisa McNeil - CCIS; Karis North - Plymouth
- Elected official attendees: Rep. Meschino
- Main issues discussed: quarantine fatigue, unemployment, economic impact, domestic violence, food insecurity, housing/rent, education, mental health, gender disparities, child care

## North Shore:

- Facilitator(s):
  - State Commissioners: Marlene Sallo, Liz Hart (Emerita), Marianne Fleckner
- Elected official attendees: Rebecca Bueno, legis. Aide to Kate Lipper-Garabedian (32nd Middlesex)
- Women’s commission attendees: Marianne Fleckner, Marlene Sallo, Elizabeth Hart (Emerita), Penny Blaisdell
- Community members attendees: Debra Falzoi
- Main issues discussed: Access to resources like technology and libraries, education, child care, food insecurity, senior citizens, housing

## Greater Boston:

- Facilitator(s):
  - State Commissioners: Marydith Tuitt, Denella Clark
  - Regional Commissioners: Kerry Akashian, Amanda M. Crabb - Eastern
- Elected official attendees: Rep. Liz Malia, Natalie Kaufman COS to Rep. Malia
- Women’s commission(s) attendees:
  - Statewide Commissioners: Marydith Tuitt, Denella Clark, Audrey Hall, Marianne Fleckner;
  - Regional Commissioners: Kerry Akashian, Amanda Crabb, Margaret Adams
- Community members attendees: Aisha Miller, Debra Falzoi, Irviene Goldson, “Peter” Lyons, Tracie Rankin, Lynda Watson, Nanette Ramos
- Main issues discussed: prenatal/birth, mental health, food insecurity, information, employment, menstrual care

Similar concerns have been echoed across communities in the Commonwealth. The following is a list of legislation that covers the needs of women and girls that address issues raised in these meetings:

- [H4647](#)- Prohibits landlords or property owners from terminating a tenancy or sending eviction notice, including a notice to quit or vacate a property in cases of non-essential eviction (Signed by Governor).
- [H4652](#)- Decarceration bill, which discourages incarceration of nonviolent offenders during the pandemic (Referred to Joint Committee on the Judiciary).
- [H4697](#)- Provides cash assistance to certain persons over 65 years of age who stopped working as a result of COVID-19. Otherwise known as The Care Act (Referred to Joint Committee on Elder Affairs).
- [H4717](#)- Expands access to MassHealth for all those who qualify for unemployment benefits, and all who are directly impacted by COVID-19 (Referred to Joint Committee on Health Care Financing).
- [H4732](#)- Authorizes a 50 million dollar fund to support local food pantries during the pandemic (Referred to Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities).
- [H4745](#)- Provides hazard pay for essential workers (Referred to Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development).
- [S2571](#)- The Department of Public Health shall maintain a toll-free telephone hotline that shall be responsible for responding to and forwarding complaints of domestic violence (Referred to Joint Committee on the Judiciary).
- [H4448](#)- There shall be a Legislative Commission tasked with examining and making recommendations to reduce or eliminate racial disparities in maternal mortality (Referred to Joint Committee on Health Care Financing).
- [S2647](#)- To provide assistance to vulnerable populations by lifting the asset test to receive aid under both TAFDC and EAEDC programs (Referred to House Committee on Ways and Means).



- [H4616](#)- Allows greater flexibility in the use of funds appropriated to aid the homeless. Authorizes any municipalities waive any penalties for late payment of various taxes and fees; bars the termination of essential services. Authorizes the board of education to waive some requirements for graduation (Signed by Governor).
- [H4672](#)- creates a task force to address health disparities during the pandemic, including reporting on racial disparities, and to recommend on how to improve safety for populations facing greater risks from COVID-19.
- [H4792](#)- to suspend student loan debt.
- [H4622](#) - to provide short-term relief for families in deep poverty.

*What are the next steps?*

- Another survey given out by MCSW to understand how Phase 1 of reopening is affecting women and girls across the Commonwealth.
- Write a report about the information coming from the Girls Initiative surveys and compare this report to that one.
- Have Community Meetings as a follow-up to the Girls Initiative in order to understand the legislation that is needed to support the girls in the state.