

**Massachusetts Commission
on the Status of Women**



**Fiscal Year 2018
Annual Report**

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COMMISSIONERS, STAFF, AND INTERNS

Remarks from the Chair



On behalf of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, it is my pleasure to present a brief summary of our FY18 Annual Report. It has been an exciting and active period for the MCSW: having been strongly involved in advocating for pay equity, since the passage of the Equal Pay Act, we have led numerous equal pay education panels for employers, employees, and those seeking work as well as partnered to support salary negotiation workshops across the Commonwealth; held four regional public hearings; heralded the creation of three new regional Commissions—closing the gap on state coverage; hosted our annual Women’s Advocacy Day in May at the State House; and in June, we honor more than 130 Unsung Heroines from across the Commonwealth.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Margot N. Parrot". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Margot N. Parrot, Esq.
MCSW Chair

Commissioners

- Margot Parrot, Chair, Athol
- Mary-Dith Tuitt, Vice-Chair, Boston
- Nina Kimball, Secretary, Plymouth
- Sarah la Cour, Treasurer, Quincy
- Tahirah Amatul-Wadud, Springfield
- Rebecca Bact, Auburndale
- Penny Blaisdell, Marblehead
- Ruth Bramson, Boston
- Denella Clark, Hyde Park
- Marianne Fleckner, Westford
- Jean Cotter Fox, Assonet (Freetown)
- Liz Friedman, Northampton
- Becca Glenn, Waltham
- Allison Goldberg, Marblehead
- Denise Hurst, Springfield
- Joanne Fitzgerald McCrea, Salem
- Maria Puppolo, Springfield
- Sara Schnorr, Holliston

Staff

- Jill Ashton, Executive Director
- Isabelle Greene, Program Director

Interns

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| McKenzie Chu | Emilie Lewis |
| Maegan Cross | Lucy Wen |
| Emma Cyr | Chloe Wynne |
| Cierra DeVos | Abby Kaplan |
| Ashley Latta | Alicia Espinosa |
| Brianna Driscoll | Casey Repasy |
| Shannon O'Doherty | Ruth Fuller |

INTRODUCTION

Mission

The mission of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW) is to provide a permanent, effective voice for women across Massachusetts.

Charges

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

- Study, review and report on the status of women in the Commonwealth
- Advise executive and legislative bodies on the effect of proposed legislation on women
- 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
- Identify and recommend qualified women for positions at all levels of government
- Promote and facilitate collaboration among local women's commissions and among women's organizations in the state
- Serve as a liaison between government and private interest groups concerned with issues affecting women

Organization

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women is an independent state agency charged with reviewing the status of women in Massachusetts and offering recommendations regarding policy that would improve access to opportunities and equality. The Commission is composed 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 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 2017-2018 Annual Report includes the Commission's activities and findings for the period of July 2017 to June 2018.

2018 RECOMMENDATIONS TO APPOINTING AUTHORITIES

In accordance with the responsibilities of the MCSW under MA Chapter 3, Section 66 of the Massachusetts General Laws, the MCSW respectfully submits the following recommendations for action to our appointing authorities:

Support legislation that addresses the issue of women's self sufficiency and economic security

Ending gender discrimination in disability insurance policies with An Act Providing for Equitable Coverage in Disability Policies ([S545/H482](#)) is a key component of establishing women's full self-sufficiency. Women face unnecessary financial burdens when purchasing individual disability insurance. As one of the only two types of insurance in the state that can legally charge women more than men, disability insurance providers often charge women 25% to 75% more than their male counterparts. This is blatant gender discrimination and a direct violation of the Massachusetts Equal Rights Amendment. Creating a level playing field at the most basic level, healthcare, will work to end gender disparity.

Guaranteeing family and medical leave with An Act Establishing a Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program ([S1048/H2172](#)) is another important step toward establishing self-sufficiency for women. Despite the universality of serious personal or family medical emergencies, most Massachusetts families face losing their jobs to care for themselves, their families, or children during these times, particularly in low-income and single parent households. This harsh reality disproportionately affects women as they tend to be the primary caretakers of the family and are increasingly the primary bread winners.

Another way to protect women's self sufficiency is by making it easier to arrange childcare, no matter the woman's job. An Act Supporting Working Parents who Choose to Run for Public Office ([S386/H2898](#)) would insert wording to explicitly allow working parents running for office to use campaign funds to pay for childcare while the candidate is "performing work or attending events directly related to the candidate's campaign." Assisting candidates with the cost of childcare would allow more primary caregivers—both mothers and fathers—to run for office. This will give more women the ability to run for office as they are primarily the ones who do most of the childcare.

Support legislation to provide medically-accurate sexuality education, and protect access to contraceptives

The Commission envisions a healthy, well-informed population of youth across the Commonwealth, and sees An Act Relative to Healthy Youth ([S2071/H3704](#)) as a vital component of that end goal. This bill sets a standard benchmark for health education and states that any Massachusetts public schools that decide to provide their students with sexuality education must select a comprehensive, medically accurate, and age-appropriate curriculum while respecting the rights of parents and local decision-making authority. This will ensure that all students are receiving correct and age-appropriate knowledge of reproductive health which sets them up to be healthy, knowledgeable citizens.

As part of this push for a more educated understanding or reproductive health, the Commission further supports an agenda of increasing women's access to safe, timely healthcare. Part of women's reproductive health involves access to contraceptives and other means of birth control and reproductive rights. An Act Negating Archaic Statutes Targeting Young Women ([S.2260](#)) would repeal three archaic laws that restrict women's access to contraceptives and abortion, including an 1800s ban on all abortions, a ban on contraceptive use by non-married women, and a requirement for all abortions to be performed in a hospital. The repeal of these laws protects women seeking reproductive services as well as the healthcare providers they go to. The bill strikes the word 'married' whenever it appears, and ensures protection to all Massachusetts women.

MCSW BUDGET

Commission on the Status of Women BUDGET FY18	
	FY18 GAA
Total Income from State Appropriation	\$117,012.00
Expenses	
Salaries	\$84,812.00
Operating Expenses	\$32,200.00

Remarks excerpted from the presentation to Joint Committee on Ways and Means

March 20, 2018

CSW spokesperson: Margot Parrot, Chair

On behalf of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), we respectfully request that the Joint Committee on Ways and Means consider an increase in the Commission's FY2018 budget from its current level of \$117,000 to \$170,000 in order to fulfill its mission of closing gender gaps for women and girls in the Commonwealth.

The CSW is an independent state agency, legislatively created in 1998, that exists to provide a permanent, effective voice for women across Massachusetts, while advancing women toward full equality in all areas of life and promoting their rights and opportunities.

Upon its creation, the Legislature deemed it appropriate that the Commission operate under a budget of \$198,000. The agency's budget was cut dramatically in 2010 from \$252,634 to \$70,000. Since that time members of the commission and staff have been working diligently to continue to provide, but in many cases can only strive towards, the services outlined in our enabling legislation. The fight for gender equality is an ongoing struggle and recent budget cuts have sometimes made that struggle even harder.

While women represent 51% of the population, social and cultural forces continue to disadvantage women in the Commonwealth and throughout the country. Legislation that directly affects the lives of women often receives inadequate attention or support. Our priority legislation and programing highlight a fraction of the challenges faced by women.

This year, among other goals, the CSW is advocating for legislation that would establish family and medical leave insurance; provide equitable coverage in disability policies; allow parents running for office the opportunity to use campaign funds for childcare; and ensure medically-accurate and age-appropriate health and sex education. Not only is correcting these disparities and resolving these inequalities the right thing to do, but it strengthens the health and productivity of the Commonwealth overall. We join with you in celebrating the passage of the Pregnant Workers Fairness ACT, ACCESS, and An Act Establishing Three New Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.

In the 2015-2016 legislative session, the CSW led the advocacy effort to see the Equal Pay Bill signed into law, partnering with the treasurer's office and numerous lawmakers throughout the state. In anticipation of the implementation date in July 2018, the Commission remains committed to widely providing information regarding the law to both employers and employees. In our fight for equal pay, the CSW has been committed to not only passing equal pay legislation, but to empowering women with resources and education to ensure the legislation works as intended. In 2018, our state and regional commissioners are being trained to provide salary negotiation workshops across the state to over 3,000 women, in partnership with the Treasurer's OEE, American Association of University Women, and Massachusetts Community Colleges.

Through our commitment to public hearings and expanding the reach of regional women's commissions, the CSW is steadfast in our responsibility to women and girls in Massachusetts to ensure that the policy created on Beacon Hill reflect their needs, no matter their location in the Commonwealth. The Commission has been strategic in its program spending and has continued to be a successful advocate for women despite the limitation of our budget. However, we recognize that this success is in need of a strong foundation in order to sustain the gains we have already achieved and to address the inequities and hardships that still persist among Massachusetts women.

Understanding the constrained economic landscape and its impact on every agency and commission in the Commonwealth, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women respectfully requests funding at \$170,000. We are confident that the recent progress and achievements of the Commission can be solidified, and with a strong foundation we will be able to further amplify our impact on gender inequities in the Commonwealth.

PROGRAMS, ADVOCACY, AND EDUCATION

Public Hearings

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. The public hearings are essential for the MCSW: they provide a voice to women from the whole Commonwealth to share their concerns and the Commission uses hearing testimony to shape and influence its legislative advocacy work and its annual recommendations to the appointing authorities. They are both a source of information and motivation.

The Commission held four public hearings during FY18:

Westfield Public Hearing, Westfield State University, October 24, 2017

Key issues raised at this hearing included:

Rights and status of sex workers; unjust laws relating to sex work; addressing sex work at a systemic level; lack of girls in leadership; peer pressure; lack of economic opportunities; sexual harassment; foster care system; lack of long-term rehab centers; harm reduction strategies; assistance for abuse survivors; housing; cost of toiletries; school dress code; rape culture; education policy; civic engagement; pay gap.

Lowell Public Hearing, Pollard Memorial Library, January 23, 2018

Key issues raised at this hearing included:

Sexual assault in the military; childcare laws and restrictions, including cost; feminism in schools; student leaders; domestic abuse survivors; definition of consent; patriarchy in Cambodia; Asian focused help groups; housing needs; women mentors for young women.

New Bedford Public Hearing, New Bedford Free Public Library, February 27, 2018

Key issues raised at this hearing included:

Sexual assault; paid family medical leave; minimum wage; racism; single mothers; childcare; English as a second language; health care; education; housing; criminal records; police intimidation; drug addiction; healthy relationships; homelessness; female voters; empowerment; bullying in schools; access to medical care.

Barnstable Public Hearing, Cape Cod Community College, March 27, 2018

Key issues raised at this hearing included:

Paid family medical leave; ACCESS bill; abortion access; sexual assault; custody battles; homelessness; affordable housing; housing crisis; Opioid epidemic; education; support for families with autistic children; minimum wage; gender discrimination in the workplace.

Full hearing reports are available in the appendix.



Congresswoman Tsongas addresses the Lowell hearing



Girl Scout Leader testifies at Westfield hearing

PROGRAMS, ADVOCACY, AND EDUCATION

International Women's Day 2018

On March 16, 2018, the MCSW hosted the annual International Women's Day Breakfast at Simmons College (the initially scheduled March 8th event was cancelled due to inclement weather). The commission was proud to serve as a member, along with several partner organizations of the IWD planning board, in order to guarantee the success of the event. This year's breakfast specifically focused on women's voices in the media and was moderated by Karen Holmes-Ward of WCVB-TV.



Seventh Annual Women's Advocacy Day

On May 16, 2018 the MCSW hosted its seventh annual Women's Advocacy Day at the State House. The public was invited to hear from state and regional commissioners, as well as elected officials regarding the status of women in Massachusetts and their access to equality and opportunities. Over 200 community members joined to visit with legislators and learn about the importance of considering gender when developing policy. We also shared our legislative progress and priorities including: equality in disability insurance, paid family and medical leave, the healthy youth initiative, and paid childcare for candidates.

Fifteenth Annual "Unsung Heroines of Massachusetts"

On June 20, 2018, the MCSW hosts its fifteenth annual Unsung Heroine Celebration at the State House. This event honors more than 130 Heroines from cities and towns across the Commonwealth. The Unsung Heroines are women who, without fanfare or recognition, make the Commonwealth a better place to work and live—"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, economic, political, geographic and ethnic backgrounds. All of the Unsung Heroine honorees are honored at a State House ceremony where they received appreciation from a grateful Commonwealth.

Equal Pay Day, Education Series and JustAsk! Salary Negotiation

The purpose of Equal Pay Day is to raise awareness of the wage gap that exists between men and women. Equal Pay Day marks the day to which women must work in order to earn the same amount that their male colleagues made in the previous year. In 2018, it fell on April 10. On August 1, 2016 An Act to Establish Equal Pay was passed, making Massachusetts one of the first states in the U.S. to make this significant step forward toward closing gender wage gaps by helping to target discriminatory pay practices that depress women's wages. Since its passing, MCSW, as head of the Equal Pay Coalition, has held a number of free educational panels, detailing the practical outcomes of this new law for employers, employees, and job seekers. The Commission will continue to hold pay equity panels up until implementation of the Equal Pay legislation in July 2018. Also, in 2018 MCSW has partnered with the Treasurer's OEE, AAUW and MA Community Colleges to promote the JustAsk! Salary negotiation program which empowers women to negotiate their salary to help close the gender pay gap in the Commonwealth. The first salary negotiation workshops of 2018 are scheduled to take place in Wellesley Hills on May 31st, Framingham on June 13th, and Bedford on June 19th. More information can be found at: <https://salary.aauw.org/ma/>

PROGRAMS, ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION

MCSW Speakers Bureau

Through the Speakers Bureau we share the expertise of our Commissioners and staff to speak at various panels/events with the aim of raising awareness of women's issues and the resources of the Commission, and encouraging women to engage in advocacy to achieve positive change for women throughout the Commonwealth. The 2017-2018 MCSW Speakers Bureau included the following engagements:

- September 29, **2017**, Boston Bar Association, The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, Nina Kimball
- October 6, Legislative Breakfast, Greenfield Community College, Margot Parrot
- October 6, Cambridge TV Interview, Equal Pay and MCSW, Nina Kimball
- November 2, Multicultural Conference, MSSConnect, Mary-dith Tuitt and Marie Younger-Blackburn
- December, Marshfield Public Schools and Girls Up, Jill Ashton
- December 5, Ladies Get Paid, Pay Equity Q&A, Nina Kimball
- December 8, MA Continuing Legal Education Employment Law conference, Equal Pay Panel, Nina Kimball
- January 17, **2018**, Center for Collaborative Leadership Executive Program, Women in Leadership, Ruth Bramson
- January 23, Comcast Newsmakers, Majestic Theater, West Springfield, Margot Parrot
- January 24, State House, Press Conference on Salary Negotiation Workshops, Nina Kimball
- January, Boston Women in Finance Group, Equal Pay Law, Nina Kimball
- March and April, Comcast Newsmakers (2 segments), Commission Overview and Women in the Workplace, Margot Parrot
- April, Framingham Access TV, WomenToWomen Cable, Commission Overview and Political Involvement, Margot Parrot
- April 11, Lowell Boys and Girls Club, Gender Gap, Mary-dith Tuitt
- April 12, 23rd Annual Women in Criminal Justice Conference, Keynote, Sturbridge, Tahirah Amatul-Wadud
- April 18, WNEU School of Law, Commission Legislative Agenda, Margot Parrot
- April 24, CWPPP/UMass Boston, Gender, Leadership and Public Policy, Jill Ashton
- May 3, Girl's Day on The Hill, Boston Women's Fund, Mary-dith Tuitt and Jill Ashton
- May 11, Suffolk University, Strategic Leadership Class, Jill Ashton
- May 18, 10th Annual Women in the Law Conference, Tahirah Amatul-Wadud
- May 26, 4th Annual Girl's Boston Annual Regional Summit, Jill Ashton

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 through the summer. The Commission hosted over 15 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/>

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

As a part of its mission to provide an effective voice and advocate for the women of Massachusetts, the MCSW identifies priority bills, the center of our legislative focus and action. In the 2017-2018 year, the Commission focused on addressing women's economic security, political participation and protection from discrimination through the following legislation:

Priority Bills

An Act Establishing a Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program (S.1048/H.2172)

This bill establishes employee rights to family medical leave or temporary disability leave in the event of the following: the birth of a child of the employee, the placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care, the necessity of an employee to care for a family member who has been diagnosed with a serious health condition for a period of time. Further, the bill safeguards the position, compensation, status, and benefits of the employee upon return from leave so long as ample notice to the employer is given.

An Act Supporting Working Parents who Choose to Run for Public Office (S.386/H.2898)

This act would insert wording to explicitly allow working parents running for office to use campaign funds to pay for childcare while the candidate is "performing work or attending events directly related to the candidate's campaign." Assisting candidates with the cost of childcare would allow more primary caregivers—both mothers and fathers—to run for office.

An Act Providing for Equitable Coverage in Disability Policies (S.545/H.482)

This bill would end sex discrimination in disability insurance policies. Currently, state-regulated disability insurance is classified by sex, and filings at the Division of Insurance show different premiums for men and women with the same job classification. Based on filings between 2012 and 2015 with the Division of Insurance, women paid 25%-75% more than their male co-workers do for the same insurance. Passing this legislation would end this discrimination and would put disability insurance amongst the many other types of insurance that are legally barred from discriminating based on sex.

An Act Relative to Healthy Youth (S.2128/H.3704)

This bill calls for age-appropriate and medically accurate sexual health education in each school district or public school that currently offers sexual health education. This bill promotes the benefits of abstinence and delay of sexual activity while also addressing the contraceptive and proper barrier methods to prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Further, the bill also establishes the need for a written policy of curriculum notification for parents and guardians of students receiving sexual health education in their native language.

An Act Negating Archaic Statutes Targeting Young Women (S.2260)

This bill would repeal three archaic laws that restrict women's access to contraceptives and abortion, including an 1800s ban on all abortions, a ban on contraceptive use by non-married women, and a requirement for all abortions to be performed in a hospital.

Priority Bills Signed Into Law This Legislative Session

An Act Advancing Contraceptive Coverage and Economic Security in Our State (ACCESS) (Formerly S.2210/H.4009)

This bill expands health insurance coverage of contraceptives in the Commonwealth. Under this bill health insurance policies must cover: all FDA-approved prescription contraceptive drugs and devices or their therapeutically equivalent alternatives, all FDA-approved over-the-counter contraceptive drugs and devices, a 12-month supply of contraceptive drugs and devices in a single dispensation, voluntary sterilization procedures, and education and follow-up for any provided contraceptive drugs and devices. This will improve women's access to contraceptives throughout the Commonwealth.

An Act Establishing the Massachusetts Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (Formerly S.2104/H.3680)

This bill provides safeguards for employees with conditions of pregnancy, childbirth, and other related aspects. The bill requires 'reasonable accommodations' to be provided by the employer. These accommodations include but are not limited to: more or frequent breaks, time off to recover from childbirth, acquisition or modification of equipment, seating, temporary transfer to a less strenuous or hazardous position, job restructuring, light duty, break time and private non-bathroom space for expressing breast milk, assistance with manual labor, or modified work schedule.

An Act Establishing Three New Commissions on the Status of Women and Girls (S.1119/H.1110)

This bill established three new regional commissions on the status of women and girls: an Eastern Regional Commission, an Upper Middlesex Commission, and a Plymouth County Commission. The role of the regional commissions is to review the status of women in their communities and then make recommendations regarding policies and programs that would increase opportunities and equalities. The commissions are required to file an annual report on activities, findings, and recommendations. Members will serve three year terms in a volunteer capacity.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL 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, and to provide permanent and effective voices for women and girls. Each county and regional commission reports its findings annually to MCSW.

Once the 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 the new commissioners sworn in, and conducts an opening session. After the initial appointments have been made and the opening session 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 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 total 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 the towns of Ashland, Bellingham, Dover, Framingham, Franklin, Holliston, Hopkinton, Hudson, Maynard, Medfield, Medway, Millis, Natick, Needham, Norfolk, Northborough, Norwood, Sherborn, Southborough, Stow, Sudbury, Walpole, Wayland, Wellesley, Westborough, Weston, and Wrentham, and the city of Marlborough, 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 the towns of Avon, Brookline, Canton, Cohasset, Dedham, Foxborough, Holbrook, Hull, Milton, Plainville, Sharon, Stoughton, and Westwood, and the cities of Boston, Braintree, Chelsea, Quincy, Randolph, Revere, Weymouth, and Winthrop, established in 2018

Upper Middlesex CSW—9 members representing the towns of Acton, Arlington, Ashby, Ayer, Bedford, Belmont, Billerica, Boxborough, Burlington, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Concord, Dracut, Dunstable, Groton, Lexington, Lincoln, Littleton, North Reading, Pepperell, Reading, Shirley, Stoneham, Tewksbury, Townsend, Tyngsborough, Wakefield, Westford, Wilmington, Winchester, and the cities of Cambridge, Everett, Lowell, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Newton, Somerville, Waltham, Watertown, and Woburn, established in 2018

Plymouth County CSW- 9 members from Plymouth County, established in 2018

Local Women's Commissions

There are currently ten 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 for local commissions 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.



Berkshire County Commission on the Status of Women

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

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

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

Reina Antunez (*Cheshire, MA*); Meg Bossong (*Pittsfield, MA*); Rebecca Cohen (*North Adams, MA*); Luci Leonard, Outgoing Chair (*West Stockbridge, MA*); Diane Sturtevant (*Windsor, MA*); Gwendolyn Hampton VanSant (*Great Barrington, MA*)

BCCSW Focus

In 2017-2018, BCCSW experienced significant turnover in Commissioners, and thus spent much of the year clarifying and articulating the meaning of its mission and the goals for engagement and how best to serve Berkshire County women and girls. We are excited to recruit a truly multigenerational pool of candidates for the remaining open spaces on the Commission, and to have broad representation from across Berkshire County.

Over the last year, a large range of civic groups have mobilized throughout Berkshire County, focusing on a range of social issues and policy advocacy, like Greylock Together in North County; Northern Berkshires for Racial Justice; Berkshire Pride/Out in the Berkshires; Not in Our Town; and the Four Freedoms Coalition and Indivisible in Pittsfield. The BCCSW sees a role for collaboration with these groups to particularly highlight policies and issues that are of interest and importance to women and girls in Berkshire County.

Legislative Breakfast

BCCSW hosted its annual legislative breakfast at the Pittsfield Country Club on Friday, March 16th. This year, the Commission decided to take the lead of the uptick in civic engagement, and give breakfast attendees the chance to speak on issues of importance and personal experience with their state and Congressional representatives. The breakfast took the form of a round-robin, with representatives circulating between issue-based tables to hear from constituents. These issues included Youth Concerns, Transit and Infrastructure, Domestic and Sexual Violence, Opioid Use, Affordable Housing, and Racial Justice in the Berkshires. We also paired that opportunity with a community resource fair, hosting over 15 local organizations who provide everything from legal aid to childcare to health services.

This year's breakfast was one of our best attended, by both community members and legislators. We saw over 75 community attendees, and legislators and aids from the Pittsfield Mayor's office, our state senators and representative, and aides from Senator Warren and Representative Neal's office.

We received overwhelmingly positive feedback (and it was so successful that the Junior League and Berkshire Athenaeum replicated our format at an event later in the spring), and plan to expand on this format going forward.

Goals for 2018-2019

- Establish a fully operational Commission, which will create the stability needed to accomplish our mission and goals
 - Recruit for vacant Commissioner positions
 - Partner with existing civic groups to co-host meetings
- Facilitate ongoing collaboration with the MCSW and learn from the successes of other regional Commissions
 - Explore collaboration with the Hampshire, Hampden, and Franklin County Commissions on issues of broader Western MA concern

Submitted by Meg Bossong on May 31st, 2018.

Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women
Annual Report
May 2018

Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women ~ Commissioners

Ana Brenescoto ~ Attleboro

Sylvia Gomes ~ New Bedford

Kelli Hiller ~ Freetown

Michelle Keith ~ Dartmouth

Cynthia Rose ~ Dartmouth

Erica Scott ~ Fall River

Stephanie Taylor ~ Taunton

The following were nominated and elected as officers:

Michelle Keith ~ Co-Chair

Stephanie Taylor ~ Co-Chair

Purpose:

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 Bristol County Commission on that Status of Women is to act as a permanent centralizing force and effective voice in the County of Bristol to ensure the equal status of women of every race, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, national origin, ability, age and sexual orientation in educational, economic, political, health, legal, and social spheres including the provision of information, referrals, and guidance. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the full enjoyment of life for all women throughout their lives.

Membership:

In April 2018, both Ana Brenescoto of Attleboro and Erica Scott of Fall River were appointed as Commissioners. Two remaining positions will be filled from the pool of applicants at the next advertisement in August 2018.

Hearings/Public Forums:

The Bristol County CSW and the Mass Commission on the Status of Women held a public hearing on “Women’s Issues” in New Bedford, Ma on February 27th at the New Bedford Public Library. The theme: “Citizens, government officials and organizations that advocate for women and families in the region are invited to attend and encouraged to participate. Let us know about issues that are important to you, your children, your family and your community. “

The event was attended by about 40 people. The link to view the event can be found on New Bedford Government Access at:

<http://173.9.65.75/CablecastPublicSite/show/4075?channel=1>



Issues raised were access to housing, education, affordable day care, and rights and laws to protect women from violators. Also raised were the need for more supports for women living in poverty, greater access to quality care as women have 1/3 of the beds available that men have for treatment of substance abuse disorder, and the need for greater representation in Fall River elected leadership and intervention specifically with regard to healthy relationship and cultural competency trainings in schools and communities.

Beth Perdue and Michael Bonner, both from "The Standard Times" newspaper, attended the hearing and reported the following article in print, on Twitter, and on Facebook:

<http://www.southcoasttoday.com/news/20180227/world-where-no-woman-has-to-say-again-me-too>

A world where no woman has to say again, 'Me too'

By Michael Bonner mbonner@s-t.com

Commission on Status of Women hears concerns in New Bedford

NEW BEDFORD — Her voice cracked at the end of her address to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women on Tuesday night.

Pamela MacLeod-Lima, the executive director of the Women's Center, asked what women wanted and described respect, access to education, affordable day care and rights and laws to protect their bodies from violators.

As the first speaker, MacLeod-Lima's words gripped the entire third floor room in the New Bedford Public Library. Her final words acted as the most powerful, even altering her voice.

"What do we want?" she asked one more time. "We want a world where no woman has to say again, 'Me too.'"

It drew applause from those attending the forum held by the Commission on the Status of Women, which is in its 20th year of existence comprised of 19 commissioners who dedicate their time to assess the status of women across the state and work for legislative changes.

Tuesday represented the third public hearing in a series being held across the state.

MacLeod-Lima began the discussion but others joined in with emotional testimony.

Erica Scott, of Fall River, introduced a niche topic, however, which is exactly the reason for the implementation of the commission.

Scott said she debated whether to speak about paid family medical leave or housing, but instead she spoke on running for political office as a female. In Fall River, she said, of the city's 17 elected officials, only one is a woman.

Amy Blanchette, who sat next to Scott, ran for School Committee in Fall River and said she was bombarded by negative feedback through social media. Blanchette described a meme that said she would be raped and photos that spoke about her weight.

"Women had very negative experiences of being everything from cyber bullying to offline bullying to being told you're not a qualified candidate because you don't have a car or because you're a single mom or you're a working mom," Scott said. "Basically a variety of reasons targeting their gender specifically."

Scott and Blanchette concluded the meeting that extended a bit beyond its 2-hour scheduled block.

Seven women and one man addressed the commission presenting topics ranging from childcare to the census, from minimum wage to harassment.

Cindy Couto, the director of Child Care Works for the state, added a voice of expertise to an issue that was highly discussed.

She said only Washington D.C. offers more expensive childcare in the country than Massachusetts. It can run more than \$100 a day, she said.

While her office can provide subsidies to families that need it, she said, more than 10,000 remain on the waiting list.

Raising the state's minimum wage to \$15 per hour, another topic discussed, wouldn't likely help families pay for childcare, either.

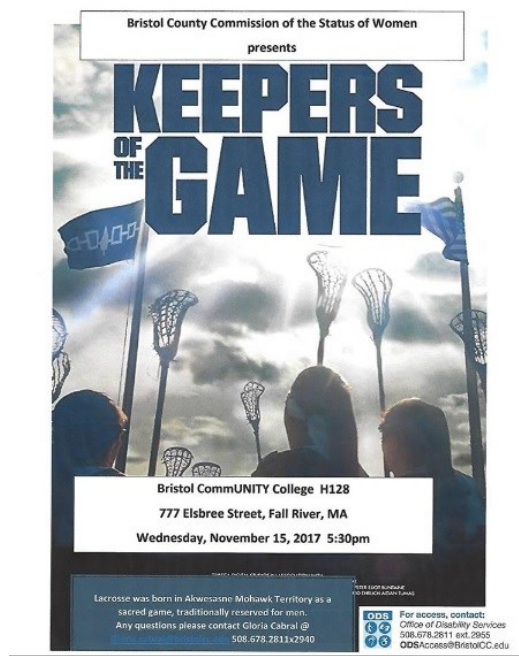
"It's a hardship. It's a hardship for many families," Couto said. "...Childcare is so expensive even if you are getting a subsidy. I don't know how anyone pays for childcare privately."

The six commissioners scribbled scores of notes as each person spoke. They promised each to bring what they heard back to lawmakers.

"We hope it goes somewhere," Margot Parrot, a commissioner, said. "We try make it go somewhere."

Additional Activities:

Film Screening: Wednesday, November 15, 2017



On Wednesday, November 15, 2018, Bristol County CSW held a Film Screening of “Keepers of the Game” at 5:30PM at Bristol Community College followed by a discussion. The film focused on changing cultural norms within the Native American community with regard to Lacrosse as a sacred game, traditionally reserved for men. See preview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMm1GdXUmVI>

Community Television Show Production (ongoing):

Bristol County CSW continued producing the Community Television Show: “Voices of Women” with 23 shows completed to date. This year’s themes included the Lighting the Way, Alda’s Angels, Sexual Assault, Women & Politics, Girls Exclusive, Advocacy Day, and the annual Oscar Special.



Voices of Women Show

11 subscribers

[HOME](#)[VIDEOS](#)[PLAYLISTS](#)[CHANNELS](#)[DISCUSSION](#)

[Uploads](#)[PLAY ALL](#)



33:15

Voice of SouthCoast Women "Women in Entertainment"

426 views • 2 years ago



31:01

Voices of Women Alda's Angels

210 views • 1 year ago



34:44

Voice of SouthCoast Women "Domestic Violence"

173 views • 2 years ago



33:01

Voice of SouthCoast Women Immigration



30:33

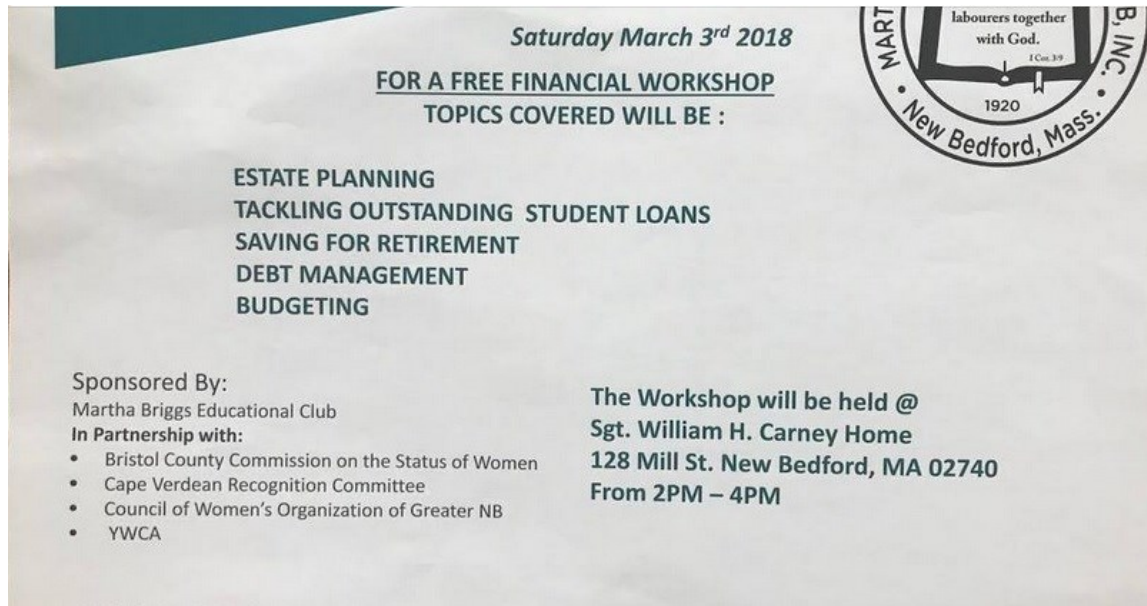
Voices of Women YWCA Girls Exclusive



32:29

Voice of SouthCoast Women The Status of Women

Free Financial Workshop: Saturday, March 3, 2018



Saturday March 3rd 2018

FOR A FREE FINANCIAL WORKSHOP

TOPICS COVERED WILL BE :

ESTATE PLANNING
TACKLING OUTSTANDING STUDENT LOANS
SAVING FOR RETIREMENT
DEBT MANAGEMENT
BUDGETING

Sponsored By:
Martha Briggs Educational Club

In Partnership with:

- Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women
- Cape Verdean Recognition Committee
- Council of Women's Organization of Greater NB
- YWCA

The Workshop will be held @
Sgt. William H. Carney Home
128 Mill St. New Bedford, MA 02740
From 2PM - 4PM

On Saturday, March 3, 2018 the Bristol County CSW held a Free Financial Workshop in partnership with the Martha Briggs Educational Club, the Cape Verdean Recognition Committee, The Council of Women's Organization of Greater New Bedford, the YWCA Southeastern Mass, and Citizen's Bank. The workshop was attended by 24 women and covered the following topics: Estate Planning, Tackling Outstanding Student Loans, Saving for Retirement, Debt Management, and Budgeting.

International Women's Day Celebration "HISTORY, HERSTORY, OUR STORY": Thursday, March 8, 2018

The Bristol County CSW participated in the following International Women's Day Celebration on Thursday, March 8, 2018 described via Facebook event as follows: <https://www.facebook.com/events/214269015817103/>

WHAT: International Women's Day is March 8th. Join a consortium of local organizations as they celebrate with a women's resource fair, networking event, and a screening of the TED talk on "intersectionality" with a panel discussion to follow. Reception with refreshments following the program.

WHO: AHA! New Bedford, Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women, Cape Verdean Association of New Bedford, Coalition for Social Justice, Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts, Martha Briggs Educational Club, New Bedford Historical Society, New Bedford Whaling Museum, Our Sister's School, SouthCoast LGBT Network, TEDx New Bedford, The Women's Center UMass Dartmouth Center for Women, Gender, and Sexuality, Women's Fund of Southeastern Massachusetts, YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts

WHERE & WHEN:

International Women's Day

Thursday, March 8, 2018

Jacobs Family Gallery

New Bedford Whaling Museum

18 Johnny Cake Hill

New Bedford, MA 02740

5:30 P.M. - 6:00 P.M. Networking and Resource Fair

6:00 P.M. - 7:15 P.M. Film & Panel Discussion

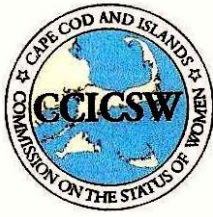
7:15 P.M. - 8:00 P.M. Reception

WHY: International Women's Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity.

Goals for 2018 - 2019

1. Collaborate with the Mass CSW and Regional Commissions to 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. Produce a webinar entitled, "Your Voice Matters! Learn How to Produce a Free TV Show to Amplify Your Message" to be presented on Friday, June 1, 2018 via NACW.
4. Present two (2) Negotiation Workshops in collaboration with the Massachusetts State Treasurer's Office, the AAUW, and Community Colleges. Two Bristol County Commissioners have already attended the training and are certified to present the workshops.
5. Present additional Free Financial Workshops addressing more specific legal issues affecting women.
6. Continue to produce the "Voices of Women" Community Television Show.
7. As a direct response to the Fall River issues identified at the February 27th Hearing, the Bristol County CSW plans to collaborate with the community to present a Women's Leadership Forum in October 2018 at Bristol Community College in Fall River featuring the Women's Leadership Breakfast by the Women's Fund from 8:00AM-10:30AM followed by two panels. The "Beyond Me Too Panel" will run from 11:00AM-12:30PM and will be co-sponsored with the Massachusetts Bar Association. The "Women As Allies" Panel will run from 1:00PM-2:30PM and will be co-sponsored with the Women's Bar Association. The aim is an outcome which will address the need for greater representation in Fall River elected leadership and intervention specifically with regard to healthy relationship and cultural competency trainings in schools and communities.
8. Attend community events and share literature about the commission to promote awareness of our role and work to increase involvement in our activities by establishing Bristol County CSW Committees and Task Forces.

Submitted May 7th, 2018 by Michelle Keith, Co-Chair of the Bristol County CSW



Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women
Annual Report
2018

Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women
Commissioners

Debbie Bryant, Bourne, Archivist (*resigned as of April 2018*)

Katia Regina Dacunha, Hyannis

Marie Doubleday, Oak Bluffs

Penelope Duby, Chair (*resigned as of April 2018*)

Tina Games, Harwich,

Susan Gardner, Falmouth, Recording Secretary

Laura Innis, Hatchville

Tracy Johnson, Brewster

Lisa Malcolm, Osterville

Lisa McNeill, Yarmouth Port

Liz Rabideau, West Barnstable: Vice Chair

Joan Walsh-Freedman, South Yarmouth: Treasurer

Marie Younger-Blackburn, Mashpee

Emerita Commissioners

Helen Bresnahan, Pocasset

Janet Joakim, Centerville

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 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.

The Commission is comprised 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 & the Islands. The Commission meets 10 (at least 6) times a year at the members' discretion.

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 appointive 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.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Commission is to advance women toward full equity in all areas of life and to promote rights and opportunities for women.

The commission meets ten times each year. It is expected that commissioners attend as many meetings as possible with absences over three 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

September 13th - Harwich Community Center, 100 Oak St., Harwich

October 11th - Sandwich Public Library, 142 Main St., Sandwich, Room 1

November 8th - Yarmouth PD, 340 Higgins Crowell Rd., West Yarmouth

December 13th - Barnstable County Complex, Harbor View Room, 3195 Main St., Barnstable

January 10th - Yarmouth PD, 340 Higgins Crowell Rd., West Yarmouth

February 14th - Barnstable County Complex, Harborview Room, 3195 Main St., Barnstable

March 14th - Falmouth Library Trustees' Room 300 Main Street, Falmouth

April 11th - Barnstable County Complex, Harborview Room, 3195 Main St., Barnstable

May9 – Eastham Community Development Space

June13: Bourne Community Center

STATUS

During 2018, CCICSW achieved a full complement of commissioners for the first time in several years. We elected a full slate of officers in January of 2017. We reviewed and revised our by-laws to include new responsibilities for our vice-chair (**Appended**) CCICSW reappointed Tina Games, Marie Doubleday and Susan Gardner in January 2018. Liz Rabideau was elected as the new Vice

Chair. Joan Walsh-Freedman was re-elected as Treasurer and Susan Gardner was re-elected as Secretary. In April two commissioners tendered their resignation, Penelope Duby and Debbie Bryant. The CCICSW in conjunction with MCSW will work to fill these two positions following the protocols of the membership protocols and bylaws.

LISTENING AND REPORTING

We spent considerable time this year collecting data to inform our future work.

Listening

Survey Summer 2017:

We completed a survey with over 700 respondents across the Cape and Islands (Appended) During the months of July, August, and September – the commission conducted an online survey of challenges and needs of women on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket with the results guiding CCICSW's advocacy, programming, and legislative priorities for the next two years. A survey summary was written and shared with the State Commission.

Hearing November 2017:

A hearing was held on November 17, 2017 at Cape Cod Community College in Barnstable. While this was an open hearing, it had a special focus on healthcare concerns since that was the number one issue that came from the results of our survey. A hearing summary was compiled and shared with local Commissioners and with the State Commission.

Reporting

What we learned as a result of the 2017 Survey and Hearings: (Full Reports in Appendix)

Women who live on Cape Cod and the Islands' lives continue to be complicated and compromised by critical housing shortages, seasonal employment issues, lack of adequate transportation and access to services.

Specific concerns that came to light as a result of our outreach through our survey, regional hearing and the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women highlighted another layer of issues that affect women's wellbeing. We have summarized these concerns in the following report.

Women have deep and continuing concerns about three general domains of health-related issues:

Mental health, substance use and women's health issues, including maternal, reproductive and sex education.

Each domain (mental health, women's health including maternal, reproductive care and education) is subject to a constellation of problems including and illustrated by the following list of concerns and examples of difficulties noted by the respondents:

- **Access to and Availability of Local Providers**, (Shortage of specialist care, detox and pediatric emergency and critical care facilities, transitional care services)
- **Affordability of Care** (Insurance issues, lack of coverage, block grants, assistance with copays and deductibles)
- **Quality of Available Programs** (Legislation and regulation, awareness of certifications and staffing qualifications, confidentiality issues, transitional programs)
- **Coordination of Available Programs** (Continuity of care and communication across care and 'step down' programs, 'cracks', funding issues, critical need for navigators)
- **Community Awareness** (Common understanding, reduction of stigma, visibility, safety and security education)
- **Supports Available for Patients and Caregivers**(FMLA, transport, education, vocational support, housing advocacy)
- **Legislative Supports** (To foster coordination, regulation, parity, added value for collaboration across services and programs)

These overarching health concerns are influenced by social determinants of health such as:

- Safety: freedom from violence,
- Security: housing, food, and utilities
- Connection to family, community and services
- Communication, access to telephone, internet, health networks
- Parity of Access to Quality Care by age, race, region
- Transportation, insurance and fuel
- Factors relative to age

The Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women will use this data in our planning for legislative support, outreach and program planning for our work in the coming year.

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE & COMMITTEES

Procedures and protocols

As a relatively new group of Commissions we spent time working on our procedures, protocols, communications and committee structures. We worked to negotiate issues around meeting attendance, meeting conduct to ensure all voices are heard and to make efficient use of our meeting time. We both formed and defined committees. Our Organization Chart was helpful and important to defining our roles. (Protocol and Org Chart appended) ATTACHED

Committee reports

Program Planning Committee: Under the guidance of Tina Games the committee during the months of July, August, and September conducted a survey of challenges and needs of women on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket with the results guiding CCICSW's advocacy, programming, and legislative priorities for the next two years. A survey summary was written and shared with local Commission members and with the State Commission. An open hearing, with a special focus on was held on November 17, 2107. A hearing summary was compiled and shared with local Commissioners and with the State Commission. The committee is planning a spring Commission Retreat in June 2018 with the theme of *visibility*, inviting Commissioners to think about ways we can be more visible in our communities, to the women we want to serve, to our legislators, to potential partnering organizations, and to each other.

Finance Committee: Under the direction of Joan Walsh-Freedman we explored the possibility of partnering (as a fiscal agent) with a local foundation in order to create a 'Friends of CCICSW' Platform. A meeting was held on May 11 with the aim of creating a fund that could be used to support our mission. Further discussions are suspended pending information and direction from the state office. Discussions with the State office yielded information on protocols and procedures for creating fundraising entities for Regional Commissions. With the regional input MSCW will be directing the path for funding opportunities and procedures for compliance with State law and regulations.

Legislative Committee: Under the direction of Susan Gardner has reviewed the MCSW Legislative Priorities and have determined that CCICSW's choice of legislation of:

Priority Legislation for the 2017-2018 General Legislative Session included:

S 499 Advancing Contraceptive Coverage and Economic Security in our State (ACCESS) Passed
S946/H.978 Housing Court Expansion Passed
S1048 Establishing a Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program
S785/H2310 End Child Marriage in Massachusetts
S1000 Establishing Just Schedules for Employees

Supported Legislation for the 2017-2018 General Legislative Session included:

S545.H482 Providing for Equitable Coverage in Disability Policies
S788/HD2873 Protect Girls from Female Genital Mutilation
S1023/H1048 Establishing a Massachusetts Pregnant Workers Fairness Act Passed

We also identified the immediate opportunity to support legislation for Housing Court Expansion and wrote letters of support for the hearing on April 13, and letters to the President of the House of Representatives, and Chairs of the Joint Judiciary Committees, copied to all Cape & Islands Legislators, all of whom have supported the legislation.

Ongoing letters of support and notices of hearings on the above bills will be shared with commissioners.

Community and Public Relations: Under the leadership of Tracy Johnson, we developed our 'elevator speech' format for our mission, purpose and tasks. We established a calendar of meeting locations for the Cape & Islands for 2017-18 in order to make our process available to a broader cross-section of the public. The committee reviewed our digital/online presence and made recommendations for postings and updates. Looking ahead the committee will take advantage of the State's website capabilities and determine the appropriate course for CCICSW's website. The committee will work with the group to understand and execute on the results of the Spring retreat with the emphasis on our *visibility* in the community.

Outreach: Under the direction of Lisa McNeill the Outreach committee convened and discussed the needs of the community and the role of outreach in meeting those needs. A particular focus was made to creating more opportunities for the Cape and Island's Brazilian community to participate in our hearings and survey's. Discussion within the committee, with elected officials and community organizations was done in an effort to determine the availability of translations services for hearings. The result was CCICSW was able to provide translation for some community members at the MCSW hearing in March. Members will attend Advocacy Day on May 16th. Commissioners will also continue to collect local contact information to expand our plans to partner with other women's groups on Cape & Islands to support women's engagement and disseminate information.

ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNITY PRESENCE

We were represented at the Regional MCSW Commissioners' Convening, Cape Women's Coalition's International Women's Day Breakfast, the International Women's Day Luncheon of the Falmouth Jewish Center, the Yarmouth Senior Center's Women's Month Meeting, MCSW March 2018 Hearing in Barnstable and our chair was awarded the Cornerstone Award by the Barnstable County Human Rights Commission and given citations from state and federal legislators for her work on women's issues.

We expanded the reach of the commission by having both Portuguese and Spanish translators available for our hearing thanks to Katia Regina Dacunha, one of our commissioners.

We attempted to determine the feasibility of forming a 'Friends of the Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women'.

Commissioners attended the Investing in Girls Alliance for the 5th Annual Statewide Gathering on Girls on May 12, 2017.

There will be a June Commission Retreat inviting Commissioners to think about ways we can be more supportive to our communities, to the women we want to serve, to our legislators, and encourage potential partnering organizations, and encourage collaboration around women's issues.

GOALS FOR CCICSW - 2018

Our goals for the remainder of 2018 and for 2019 will be reviewed and solidified through our June 2018 Retreat. With this in mind the Commissioners of CCICSW have determined through prior discussion that:

Increasing the *Visibility* of our work, in and for the community, needs to be addressed

That as an all-volunteer organization we need to be realistic in our goals and scope of work

That *Listening and Reporting* are our main objectives

That working as a team and making an impact in our community is a priority

Submitted May 21st, 2018 by Liz Rabideau, Chair of Cape Cod and Islands CSW



ESSEX COUNTY COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
ANNUAL REPORT 2018

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.

Commissioners

Sandy Almonte, *Methuen*

Paula Gomez Stordy, *Middleton*

(Resigned in 04/18) Rebecca Hallowell, Vice Chair, *Hamilton*

(Appointed 03/18) Julie DeSilva, *Beverly*

Vilma Martinez-Dominguez, *Lawrence*

(Resigned in 02/18) Heather McMann, *Haverhill*

(Appointed 03/18) Estelle Rand, *Beverly*

(Resigned in 01/18) Elsabel Rincon, *Peabody*

Sefatia Theken, *Gloucester*

Polly Titcomb, Chair & Secretary, *Swampscott*

Emeritus/Advisory Commissioners

Anne Ferguson (Co-Chair), *Amesbury*

Goals

This year, the ECCSW's goals included appointing new members to the Commission, holding a regional hearing or legislative breakfast, increasing legislative advocacy, and conducting informational interviews, all with the goal of serving the Commission's most fundamental missions.

Accomplishments

Membership

This year, three commissioners, Rebecca Hallowell, Heather McMann, resigned from their appointed positions due to personal and professional circumstances. Each of these women was enormous assets to the Commission and their absence leading and subsequent to their formal resignations hugely impacted the achievements the Commission was able to accomplish this year.

Fortunately, the Commission also appointed two new fabulous commissioners, Estelle Rand and Julie DeSilva. Their expertise, dedication, fresh perspective, and cooperative spirits have already proven to be huge assets for the Commission. We are thrilled to welcome these impressive women and look forward to seeing all the ways in which they will undoubtedly continue to contribute to and fulfill our mission.

We are extremely grateful for the ongoing presence and commitment of the one-and-only Anne Ferguson, who reached her maximum years of service under the MCSW's bylaws in early 2017 and therefore has been serving in an emeritus/advisory capacity. The commission simply would not be the same without Anne, who helped to found this Commission years ago, and we are thankful for her continued service.

Thanks to the efforts of the new MCSW Regional Outreach Coordinator, Isabelle Greene, the ECCSW had several applicants to choose from to fill our vacant seats this past year. The ECCSW will collaborate with Isabelle again in the coming months to fill our final open seat over the summer.

Legislative Outreach

This year, the ECCSW adopted two legislative priorities: An Act Establishing A Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program (H. 2172/S. 1048) and An Act Providing Equitable Coverage in Disability Insurance (H. 482/S. 545).

In March, 2018, the Commission was trained in the Act Establishing A Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program by MCSW Commissioner, Becca Glen, who has proven to be an increase resource and great support for our Commission.

A few weeks after being trained, the Commission had intended to participate in its own Phone Banking effort, but a lack of quorum at the meeting and other related issues precluded this possibility as the meeting was effectively cancelled.

On April 30, 2018, the Commission held a Legislative Breakfast hosted by our very own Mayor Sefatia Theken at City Hall in Gloucester. The event was a great success. There were over 50 attendees; four legislators, including Reps Paul Tucker, Jerald Parisella, Ann-Margaret Ferrante, and Senator Bruce Tarr; and a majority of our Commissioners. Each legislator presided, giving detailed accounts of and showing support for the two bills. In addition Mayor Theken, Commissioner Paula Gomez Stordy, and Chairperson

Polly Titcomb spoke about the Commission, the need to be engaged in women's issues, and expressing their gratitude to the legislators for their continued support and for all of those who freely attended the Breakfast.

Finally, several Commissions plan to be in attendance at this year's Advocacy Day to support the MCSW's effort to get their critical priority legislation passed.

Training to Become Salary Negotiation Workshop Facilitators

Earlier in 2018, several members of the Commission also participated in the Salary Negotiations Workshop offered by ACLU. The training was a great start, but the Commission did not feel prepared after just that initial training to facilitate its own workshops without further education and guidance. Therefore, the Commission is working with our MCSW liaison, Penny Blaisdell, to determine what steps are needed in order to better prepare our Commission, and others in a similar position, to be more fully trained in facilitating a workshop. The Commission is looking forward to fulfilling its goal of holding the two required salary negotiation trainings in the coming year.

MCSW Collaboration

The ECCSW is extremely grateful for the increased and ongoing collaboration with the MCSW. The MCSW Commissioner liaison to the ECCSW, Penny Blaisdell, continues to be an *extraordinary* asset to our Commission, and we are grateful for the productive efforts of the new Regional Outreach Coordinator, Kelly Lynch, as well.

Statistical Data

The following statistics have been generously provided by newly resigned commissioner, Rebecca Hallowell, through her active role in The Women's Fund of Essex County:

Demographics:

Females are 52% of total population

57% of the 65+ population is female

Age Distribution of Females:

< 18: 21%

18-34: 20%

35-64: 41%

65+: 18%

Median female age is 42.5 years

Marital Status of Females (Ages 15+)

31% Never married

46% Now married (except separated)

2% Separated

12% Divorced

Childbirth & Marriage

27% of women who gave birth in past 12 months were unmarried (compare to 31% in 2016 and 38% in 2013)

Place of Birth

84% Native born

16% Foreign born (of foreign born, 55% are naturalized citizens)

Households:

Overall Female Householders

13% of all households

19% of all families

Latina or Hispanic Female Householder Families

39% of all female householder families

44% of all Latino families

Black or African American Female Householder Families

6% of all female householder families

35% of all Black or African American (alone) Families: 35%

Asian Female Householder Families:

3% of all female householder families

15% of all Asian families

Total Families with Own Children

Overall Female householder with their own children:

58% of female householder families

26% of all families with children

Latina or Hispanic Female Householder Families

53% of all female householder families

35% of Latino families

Black or African American (alone) Female Householder Families

7% of all female householder families

23% of all Black or African American Families

Average Family Size

Married Couple: 3.3 people

Male Householder: 2.9 people

Female Householder: 3.2 people

Households Which Own Their Own Home vs. Rent

64% of all families own; 36% rent

39% of all female householders; 61% rent

Females Ages 35-64: 56% rent

Females Ages 65+: 27% rent

Median Family Income

\$35,183 Female Householder families (compare with \$53,250 for Male Householder families)

\$25,530 Female Householder families with children (compare with \$43,258 for Male Householder families)

Women & Poverty: Generally

59% of the population living below the poverty level (100% of Poverty Level) are women and girls

26% are Female Householder families

67% of Female Householder families are single mothers with children; on average they are 36% below the poverty line

33% are Female Householder families without children; on average they are 6% below the poverty line

60% of the “poorest poor” (50% of poverty level) are women and girls

59% of the population living below 125% of the poverty level are women and girls

Women, Poverty & Race/Ethnicity (single race/ethnicity)

Highest total number of women in poverty are white women

Highest rates of poverty are: Latina women (28.5%), Black Women (27.7%)

Children in Families Living Below the Poverty Level

17% of all children in families

Of all children who live in poverty, 69% live in Female Householder families

43% of children living in Female Householder families are living below the poverty level

60% of children in Female Householder families receive public assistance

Public Assistance in Last 12 Months (SSI, cash, &/ or Food Stamps/SNAP benefits)

60% of children in Female Householder families (compare with 37% of those in Male Householder families)

Percentage of Female Householder Families (With Children <18) Living below Poverty Level by Nativity

Total: 36.6%

Native: 34.3%

Foreign Born: 41.6%

Naturalized: 26.4%

Non-Citizen: 61.2%

Families by Race & Ethnic Origin by Poverty

White:

52% of Female Householder Families

17% live below poverty line

Black:

6% of Female Householder Families

34% live below poverty line

Asian:

3% of Female Householder Families

11% live below poverty line

Hispanic/Latino/a

39% of Female Householder Families

39% live below poverty line

Median Earnings for Full-Time, Year-Round Workers

On average, Females earn 79% of what Males do

Native born Females earn 83% compared to their Male counterparts

Foreign Born/Naturalized Female citizens make 65% compared to their Males counterparts

Foreign Born/Non-Citizen Females make 40% compared to Men's average median earnings

Work Hours Per Week (Ages 16-64)

35+ Hours/Week: 49% females (68% males)

15-24 Hours/Week: 22% females (13% males)

1-4 Hours/Week: 6% females (3% males)

Did Not Work: 23% females (16% males)

Mean Hours Worked Per Week

Females: 34

Males: 40

Summary of Educational Attainment and Poverty Rate by Head of Household

	Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Some College	High School Degree	< High School Degree	HS De- gree or Less	Overall Poverty Rate
Female Householders	20%	32%	29%	19%	48%	26%

Female Households & Single Mothers in Poverty in Essex County

Methuen	2,514	20%	1,674	67%	496	30%
Salem	2,769	28%	1,843	67%	637	35%
Gloucester	1,255	16%	786	63%	175	22%
Beverly	1,690	18%	1,008	60%	233	23%
Amesbury	750	17%	475	63%	94	20%
NBPT	664	15%	356	54%	70	20%

Poverty Rate for Population Ages 25+ by Educational Attainment

City	< HS Degree	HS Degree or Equal	Some College or Associates	Bachelor's or Higher
Lawrence	36.0%	29.9%	17.7%	26.1%
Lynn	36.6%	11.0%	20.9%	6.8%
Salem	41.2%	18.3%	14.5%	6.3%
Haverhill	29.7%	12.7%	8.8%	4.3%
Methuen	28.5%	11.8%	7.9%	3.6%
Peabody	23.9%	13.0%	8.1%	4.6%

Female Householder Housing Tenure

City	Female Householder Housing Tenure	
	% Owner Occupied	% Renter Occupied
Lawrence	17%	83%
Lynn	27%	73%
Salem	32%	68%
Haverhill	37%	63%
Methuen	48%	52%
Peabody	54%	46%

Findings

Aside from the eye-opening data provided above, the Commission unfortunately did not have substantial opportunity to make significant findings this past year. We intend to resolve this issue in the coming year.

Conclusions

It has become clearer than ever just how critical it is for the Commission to have consistent attendance at meetings and enduring membership in order to accomplish any of our goals. Despite holding an “Annual Retreat” last summer to outline the goals we wanted to accomplish this year and very specific strategies and timelines to attain these goals, the lack of consistent attendance at meetings entirely undermined these noble efforts. The Commission picked up momentum toward the end of this year, which resulted in

Goals for 2018

Recruit one or more new members who will be active and consistent participants on the Commission

Continue to become a more fully operational Commission, which will create the stability needed to accomplish our mission and goals.

Choose and advocate for our legislative priorities to elected officials and other lobbying groups, including hosting a legislative breakfast, meeting individually or in pairs with our local legislators, phone banking, and attending Advocacy Day

Interview local non-profits to become better informed about the most pressing issues facing women in Essex County; get testimony through these organizations

Become a better and more effective bridge for local organizations studying women's issues/advocating for positive change in their Essex County communities. Ways to accomplish this goal include:

- informing them about our legislative priorities;

- linking them to other local organizations;

- assisting with and attending their hearings/educational forums; and

- distributing their information to local legislators/other activist groups to help spread the data on the status of women in Essex County

Become fully trained in and facilitate at least two Salary Negotiation Workshops

Inform leaders of business, education, healthcare, municipalities and communications media on issues pertaining to women in Essex County, including writing timely Op-Eds in various local papers

Facilitate ongoing collaboration with the MCSW and increased collaboration with other regional Commissions

Continue to study and report on the status of women in Essex County

Submitted by Polly Titcomb on May 6, 2018

Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

Dawn Forbes DiStefano
Michelle Goncalves
Patricia Hallberg

Nicole Murray
Jennifer Metsch
Ellen Moorhouse

Arlene Rodriguez
Shanique Spalding
Shaitia Spruell

ANNUAL REPORT May 2018

Members:

Dawn Forbes DiStefano—West Springfield
Michelle Goncalves—Ludlow
Patricia Hallberg—Wilbraham
Jennifer Metsch—Longmeadow
Ellen Moorhouse—Springfield
Nicole Murray—Agawam
Arlene Rodriguez—Springfield
Shanique Spaulding—Springfield
Shaitia Spruell—Springfield

Elected Officers:

Nicole Murray—Chair
Shanique Spaulding—Vice Chair
Michelle Goncalves—Secretary

Purpose:

On April 25, 2017, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women inaugurated nine new commissioners to a newly formed regional commission created to study and report on the status of women and girls in the twenty-three towns and cities that make up Hampden County, Western 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.” Taking from the brief provided, the Regional Commissions: “Modeled after the MCSW, the...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, and to provide permanent and effective voices for women and girls. Each county and regional commission reports their findings annually to MCSW.”

Membership:

Last April, nine Commissioners were sworn into the newly established group. We had one member leave at the end of her term and one new member join. We also voted in a new Secretary when the previous Commissioner’s term was completed. In our May 2018 meeting, we made nominations for the elected positions for the next year. We will be voting on those next month.

Our focus this year regarding our membership has been on creating committees, establishing who would be on them, and for what length of time each member would serve on each committee. We wanted to be sure that everyone had a chance to be on each committee, but we also wanted to make sure there was a continuity in the process so that the forward movement of each committee would not stall with changes of Commissioners on the committees.

Accomplishments:

This year has been about strengthening our commission’s foundation by establishing regular meetings, a succinct agenda and firming it all up with bylaws. We wanted this foundation to be strong when we put ourselves out to the public. We wanted the women and girls of Hampden County to feel confident in our ability to adequately represent them and their interests throughout the state. This attention to detail has paid off thus far and we now hope to be able to really dig in now. Here are a few things we have accomplished this year:

Our Legislative Subcommittee worked heavily on establishing bylaws for our commission. Now that they have been completed, the Legislative Subcommittee will be moving toward finding legislation our commission will champion. The idea is to begin writings including letters of support regarding the legislation, expressing how that legislation helps further the interests of women and girls in Hampden County, while also providing information so that women and girls of Hampden County are kept in the loop regarding the goings on within the legislature.

Our Social Media and Communications Subcommittee has been working on giving the Hampden County Commission an online presence. On January 11, 2018 we joined Facebook. The page currently has 183 “likes”. The Social Media Subcommittee has created a draft Social Media Policy, which we are in the process of finalizing. They also put together a HCCSWG email address (HCCSWG@gmail.com) with a general email response message created to acknowledge any emails received before the designated Commissioner can respond. This has been added to our notice in case someone wishes to speak during the Public Speakout portion of our monthly meetings. Those who wish to speak are asked to let us know in advance so that ample time is allotted. The Committee is working on a outreach campaign to identify County and regional events and issues that should be promoted through our social media pages, and they have plans to create events for all future HCCSWG meetings in order to better publicize our activities.

The Programming Subcommittee has been planning our first official public hearing, currently scheduled for November 8, 2018 at the Chicopee Boys and Girls Club and are working to build a database of relevant county-based organizations to invite and engage in the hearing, thereby increasing our commissioner knowledge of the county and introducing our commission to key organizations in the area. The Programming Subcommittee has also arranged our participation in the CHD Through her Eyes conference at the MassMutual Center on October 25, 2018 as part of our county listening tour.

As a commission, we hosted Jessica Collins, Executive Director, and Jessie Gleckel, Senior Research Associate, of the Public Health Institute of Western MA Committee Sessions on March 15, 2018 to learn more about the health of women and girls in Hampden County and agreed to explore partnership opportunities between the commission and the institute related to events and activities relevant to women and girls in the county.

We also hosted Jennifer Falcone, Coordinator of Western MA Business Against Human Trafficking, on January 11, 2018 to discuss human trafficking in Hampden County and agreed to explore partnership opportunities between the commission and the organization related to events and activities relevant to women and girls in the county, especially as the Springfield casino opens.

Members of our group attended MCSW Advocacy Day again this year where they were able to advance issues of importance to our county with our elected officials. Those in attendance were Shanique Spalding, Arlene Rodriguez and Jennifer Metsch.

We have hosted 9 commission meetings in 8 different cities and towns across Hampden County (Holyoke, Springfield, Agawam, Ludlow, Longmeadow, West Springfield, East Longmeadow and Monson) in an effort to get the commission out into the communities we serve. On top of this, we have created an online space where we store past notices, agendas and minutes, allowing members of the public to check out any and all of these accomplishments.

Conclusions:

This past year we really wanted to put our focus on getting basics down regarding the setup of our organization. We have worked diligently on getting a meeting agenda that maximizes our time and effort. We have established committees and provided time within the meeting space to discuss both in our committees and as a full commission, opportunities for our commission to further our mission. We have actively sought out organizations within Hampden County to find out more about the overall climate of the county and how to best serve the women and girls of the area. We are excited now to begin our second full year as a commission by going out and hearing more about what the women of Hampden County are looking for and would like to see from us. We have been lucky to have had members of the public at most meetings. We will be expanding on that by having the hearing in November, and most likely another one in the spring of 2019.

Respectfully submitted on May 30 2018 by Nicole M. Murray, Chair HCCSWG

Hampshire- Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

Annual Report 2018

Commissioners

Denise Brown (Northampton), Vice Chair
Marianne Bullock (Greenfield)
Ginetta Candelario (Northampton)
Linda-Jeanne Mack (Easthampton), Clerk
Bonnie MacCracken (Amherst), Treasurer
Keleigh Pereira (Turners Falls)
Marcia Plant Jackson (Leverett)
Chelsea Sunday Kline (Northampton)
Francia Wisnewski (Montague), Chair

HD#1867 Act Established in January 11th, 2017 a Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women. This legislation has created a permanent Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women, consisting of nine individuals to be appointed by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women. Per its enabling legislation, the Hampshire-Franklin Commission is charged with conducting an ongoing study of matters concerning women within Hampshire and Franklin counties. The Commission is mandated to report its findings to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women annually and to recommend solutions to the challenges facing the women and girls of the Hampshire-Franklin area.

Completed Bylaws

Our Commission established a group of temporary officers until we finalize our bylaws. These bylaws will guide our purpose in the region, we are excited to have finalized a draft. A State Commissioner with law background is supporting us in ensuring that we have appropriate language and compliance.

We allotted time during each meeting to go over a portion of the bylaws, therefore it took us most of the year to finish a draft in satisfaction. We project to have our final approved version for July of 2018.

Searched for and hired an unpaid student research and media intern

Our regional commission is pleased to have worked with Heather Honig as our first intern supporting our work. Our fellow Commissioner, professor Ginetta Candelario offered us an opportunity to be a liaison and finding us a student at Smith College. We offered to Heather the position of Resources Research Internship.

Heather focused her work in:

- 1) Identifying organizations, initiatives, projects, etc. currently serving or otherwise addressing issues related to the status of women and girls in Hampshire and Franklin Counties;
- 2) Compiling that data;
- 3) Developing and populating a searchable database;
- 4) Preparing a resource guide;
- 5) Present brief updates on the progress of the work at the meeting of the Commission held on the last Monday of every month (February 26, March 26, April 30).

This project took about 100 hours and began the week of February 9th. The project was completed by the end of May, 2018 when classes ended at the college.



Heather Honig is a rising senior at Smith College studying Sociology and Education & Child Study. She is most interested in finding ways to make education equitable and accessible to all people, no matter their background. She has worked with numerous organizations that seek to accomplish this, including Project Coach in Springfield, MA; Homework House in Holyoke, MA; and The Institute for Educational Advancement in Pasadena, CA. Most recently, she was responsible for creating the Commission's resource guide. She hopes that this resource guide will empower and support women in Hampshire and Franklin counties and that it continues to expand in the years to come.

Developed a Guidebook

This guide is in draft version, but ready to share in July of 2018. Includes resources available in our region for women and girls. We will be taking a step further in seeking ways to share widely with local networks and search engines.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/15AkcCRU3ITuakHGeyzXtL8ZMgKc6MdPfP9w0kWL1T7c/edit>

Held 10 public Commission Meetings

Our Commission has consistent and well attended meetings. We take turns every month in each one of the region representing. Our meeting are scheduled for two hours and have been held on the third Monday of every month.

Participated in the Franklin County Resource Network's Legislative Breakfast

Last October 6th of 2017, our Commission was invited to be part of “Amplifying the Voices of Rural Women and Girls” from 8:30-11 at the Greenfield Community College. This legislative breakfast was organized by the Franklin County Resource Network. Under this umbrella, one of our Commissioners Keleigh Pereira serves as head organizer and was part of the planning Committee for the event. We have the opportunity to join legislators and community members that shared their stories of success and challenges. Margo Parrot, Chair of the MCSW was the keynote speaker. * Remarks from Margo Parrot, ** Remarks from Francia Wisnewski



Attended the Statewide Regional Commission meeting

Our Commissioners attended the Semiannual meeting, hosted at the YWCA in Worcester on November 14th of 2017. Topics covered were:

Individual Commission Updates, Successes and Challenges

Marketing, outreach, and communications

Expanding collaboration with other regional commissions and MCSW, e.g. legislative agenda, unsung heroine nominations

Developing programming and events

Ethics (Open Meeting Law and Conflict of Interest handout with URL to online training site)

Legislative Outreach

Conflict Resolution

Commissioner trained in the “Salary Negotiation” for the MCSWG

Commissioner Denise Brown, was trained to be a facilitator for the “Just Ask” Salary negotiation training. This training is A Collaborative Initiative The [American Association of University Women](#) (AAUW) and [Office of State Treasurer and Receiver General](#), led by State Treasurer Deborah Goldberg, launched a statewide initiative to teach 5,000 women a year to negotiate their salaries and benefit packages with confidence. The initiative also aims to help [close the gender pay gap in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts](#).

Commissioned a logo design for the HFCSWG

Commissioner Linda Jean Mack found an in-kind donation of a local graphic designer, Ms. Kristin Centrella. The logo will be finalized by July of 2018. The graphic contains the female (Venus) symbol ♀ and behind it will be a river representing the Connecticut river as the commonality of our region.

Researched potential fiscal agents

We have been voicing our need to build a budget to support activities for our commission. Our Treasurer Bonnie MacCracken connected with The Peace Development Fund, in Amherst, as they offer fiscal sponsorship opportunities. The sign-up fee is \$250 (non-refundable) and the annual fee is \$95.

Website hosting is also offered at \$35 a year. Bonnie found them through the National Network of Fiscal Sponsors. The Commission discussed the possibilities for raising the required funds to get the fiscal sponsorship started.

A discussion was had regarding the 7.5% off the top of funds that the Peace Development Fund would charge. It was concluded that this was a typical rate. We understand that we cannot start this fund until we clarify our roles and responsibilities by legislation statute.

Participated in Pregnant Workers Protection Act Training with State Commissioner Liz Friedman

On March 2nd, Commissioner attended a webinar with State Commissioner Liz Friedman on Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, legislation details, components of advocacy and lessons learned in the Commonwealth.

Invited Commissioner Friedman to act as MSCSWG Liaison

We have been lucky have the support of the State Commission's Chair, Margot Parrot, she was acting as our mentor since she lives in Franklin County. We were happy to learn that Liz Friedman was named to the State Commission and is our new liaison.

Attended Franklin County Chamber of Commerce Breakfast

We decided to build relationships with local business owners and members of the various chamber of commerce in the two counties that we serve. Our first participation was on February 23 of 2018 at GCC. The breakfast featured Congressman Jim McGovern and his presentation on key issues pressing our congregational district.



Welcomed new Greenfield Commissioner

Last fall we lost a commissioner due to personal circumstances. We had a successful search with thirteen qualified applicants. After making our recommendation to the State Commission, Last December, we welcomed Marianne Bullock to complete our commission.

One Commissioner completed her starting 6-month term, and was re-appointed for a 3-year term.

After being sworn in as the first commission of the region, Commissioner Ginetta Candelario completed her term and accepted a unanimous reappointment for a subsequent three-year term.

COMMISSIONERS	BIO
	Bonnie MacCracken Amherst, MA Bonnie is a business owner, mother, grandmother, and has dedicated over 10+ years to public service and leadership in community nonprofits, boards, and on issues of housing insecurity. She chairs the NAACP, New England Area Conference's housing committee; is a founding member of the Amherst Community Land Trust, established to increase affordable housing; and appointed to the Hampshire-Franklin Commission in 2017. In 2012, she drafted and successfully lobbied for an amendment to the Massachusetts Homestead Act to protect deployed Massachusetts servicemembers from foreclosure of their homes. This amendment passed under the Valor Act of 2012. Simultaneously she operates her 30-year real estate-title research business, specializing in extensive, in-depth legal research on titles to land for residential and commercial closings and works pro bono with Massachusetts Alliance Against Predatory Lending with foreclosed homeowners and on drafting policy. Bonnie resides in Amherst with her family. She is graduate of the Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts Leadership Institute for Political and Public Impact (LIPPI) and Anna Maria College.
	Chelsea Sunday Kline Northampton, MA Chelsea is a graduate of Smith College and Harvard Divinity School, and a higher education administrator and educator focusing on supporting non-traditional female students. She leads a few academic and leadership programs at Bay Path University in the American Women's College, including the Women as Empowered Learners and Leaders (WELL) program, the Leadership and Organizational Studies (LOS) program, as well as the Arts and Humanities offerings. Chelsea has a long history of work in social justice and reproductive rights organizing, activism, and volunteerism, and has attended countless marches, demonstrations, and conferences. She was a student organizer of the Civil Liberties Public Policy (CLPP) conference and joined the Reproductive Rights Activist Service Corps (RRASC) to intern with the National Network of Abortion Funds. She was a founding member of the Badass Activists of the Pioneer Valley, and has volunteered with Planned Parenthood, Feminist Majority, Tapestry Health, and Food Not Bombs, among others. Chelsea is a member of the Hampshire & Franklin County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, the Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts (WFWM) board of directors, and the Leadership Institute for Political and Public Impact (LIPPI) advisory council. She also serves as community religious advisor for Jewish students at Smith College. Chelsea lives in Northampton with her husband and has three children ages 4, 10, and 21.



Denise Brown
Northampton, MA
 B.S., M.S., CIM., LIPPI "15,"
 PhD Student (Capella University)
 Commissioner/Co-Chair



Francia Wisniewski
Montague, MA

Francia Wisniewski A 17-year resident of Franklin County, Francia has been a tireless advocate for children, families, women and individuals. She works as the Senior Program Manager for Raising A Reader MA in the Pioneer Valley, focusing her work in supporting families and their children for school readiness success. She has worked for other local nonprofit anti-poverty organizations throughout the years and she continues to volunteer her services in various community initiatives. She is representing the community as a current elected town meeting member. Francia holds a Bachelor's Degree in teaching sciences from Cali, Colombia and a Master's degree in Education from the University of Massachusetts. She also serves on the boards of the Shea Theater and Leadership Pioneer Valley. Before moving to Montague, she served two terms on the Greenfield School Committee, including two terms as Vice-Chair. She is a graduate of the Emerge Massachusetts program.



Ginetta E.B. Candelario
Smith College
Northampton, MA 01063

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 feminismos 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).



**Keleigh Pereira
Turners Falls, MA**

Keleigh is the Family Self-Sufficiency Director for the Greenfield Housing Authority and Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment. She works on engaging in community organizing & collaboration with a lens for social policy, women's issues, GLBTQ & racial justice equity within systems, programs, and society. She lives in Turners Falls with her children and partner and is currently furthering her education at UMASS, Amherst. She is the co-chair for the Franklin County Resource Network's Public Policy Task Force, is an organizer for Franklin County Pride, Inc., is a trained volunteer for the Center for Community Resilience After Trauma, Incorporator for the United Way of Franklin County, and an elected voting member of Montague's Town Meeting. Keleigh is a proud graduate of the Leadership Institute of Political and Public Impact.



**Linda-Jeanne M. Mack, MSW, LCSW
Easthampton, MA**

LJ is the director of the child welfare adoption program at Berkshire Children and Families in Hadley, MA. She has worked consistently with families involved with the child welfare system and children and youth experiencing foster care for the past nine years. She also works part time as an outpatient clinician at Clinical and Support Options and is an adjunct professor in the Bachelors of Social Work program at Western New England University.



**Marcia Plant Jackson, MSN, MPA, RN, FNP-C
Leverett, MA**

Marcia received her advanced practice degree from Indiana University School of Nursing and her MPA from Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs. She also was adjunct clinical faculty with Indiana University and Ball State University. She has spent time caring for families in school based community health centers as well as numerous specialty programs for the homeless, HIV/AIDS and women's health. Marcia strongly believes that *healthcare is a right, not a privilege, Healthy people benefit the whole of society.*



**Marianne Bullock
Greenfield, MA**

Marianne is the Manager of Community Action's Family Resource Center, currently working with youth and parents involved in the juvenile system and family drug courts in Franklin County, Mass. She is the administer of The Peoples Fund, a mutual aid network providing funds to keep families together in the face of deportation, incarceration and separation. She is founder of The Prison Birth Project a nonprofit prison doula program that operated for 10 years in western mass. She is currently writing curriculum and training birth workers to work specifically with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated pregnant and substance using people.

* Margot Parrot, Remarks to
12th Annual Legislative Breakfast
Franklin County Resource Network
October 6, 2017

Speak Up: Amplifying the Voices of Rural Women and Girls

First, thank you to Keleigh Pereira and to the Franklin County Resource Network for inviting me to participate today. I'm very excited to see so many people here, especially our legislators -- and the topic of the day, *Speaking up and amplifying the voices of rural women and girls*, is a subject very close to my heart.

It happens that I am the only member of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women who actually lives on a farm! I think that qualifies as rural. When I introduce myself to people in Eastern Massachusetts, I usually explain that I live just north of their water supply, and I let that sink in for a minute.

Before I talk about ways in which we can amplify our own voices and those of others, I should tell you something about the Commission on which I serve. The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women was created in May 1998 by the Massachusetts legislature, and we began operation in 1999. The legislation was inspired by the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women, held in 1995, which heightened the awareness of women's status around the world. The Beijing Conference specifically urged federal and state governments to create Women's Commissions. Our body of commissioners is made up of 19 volunteers of diverse backgrounds, representing all regions of the state, with many different areas of expertise and experience.

Commissioners are appointed by 4 authorities:

Governor

Senate President

Speaker of the House

Caucus of Women Legislators

The Commission exists to provide a permanent, effective voice for women across Massachusetts.

Our mission is to advance women toward full equality in all areas of life and to promote rights and opportunities for all women.

I should add, that when the original Commission was formed, it didn't occur to legislators to include girls in the title; but we are very aware that we represent women in the broadest sense, at all stages of life, and including members of the LGBTQ community.

The Commission is empowered to:

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

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

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

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

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

In a nutshell, we are expected to Amplify the Voices of Women and Girls across the Commonwealth. This is a broad charge for 19 volunteer commissioners, most of whom have jobs and families! So how do we do it?

First, we ought to find out what women and girls say they need, if we are to advocate for them. We do this in several ways. Of course, 19 Commissioners all bring their own experiences to the table. Plus we have, at present, 8 regional commissions, who report to us. Their members, whom we appoint, are diverse and represent the population and geography of the particular region. These regional commissions are the result of 8 separate pieces of legislation through the years. Only 3 regions remain unrepresented, and a bill is currently pending in the legislature, S.1119/H.1110: An Act Establishing Three New Commissions on the Status of Women and Girls. This would create the last three regional commissions, effectively covering the state. In Western Mass we currently have a Berkshire CSW, a Hampden CSW, and a Hampshire Franklin CSW. These regional commissions hold meetings open to the public, and the meetings are posted with all the Town Clerks in the particular region. So this is an opportunity for Western Mass women to get involved, by speaking to these regional commissions and by applying to be appointed to these commissions. We receive an annual report from each regional commission; we meet with them twice a year; and we have specific state commissioners assigned as liaisons to each region.

Another way the state commission keeps informed is by holding four public hearings across the state each year. Since my appointment 5 years ago, we have held Western Mass hearings in Greenfield, Northampton, Holyoke, North Adams, and Pittsfield. This October 24th we will hold a hearing at Westfield State University. We publish information on our web site about these hearings and I encourage everyone to attend. Our web site, BTW, has been changed by the state, but you can find it by Googling Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, which will also give you our Facebook page.

Some of the issues we have heard about in the past year in these hearings include:

Lack of free legal services; Childcare availability and affordability; Lack of youth-specific services to tackle opioid addiction; Unique needs of rural Massachusetts vs. urban MA; North Adams hospital closure and resulting lack of rural maternity services; Lack of public transportation; Lack of detox and stabilization center; reductions in social services funding; Sexual harassment; Impoverishment; State-sponsored retirement; Child abuse; Suicide; Learning disabilities; Bipolar disorder; Sexual abuse; Benzodiazepine addiction; Anti-women/anti-immigrant rhetoric and targeting undocumented immigrants; Support services for breastfeeding; Domestic Violence; Older female homeowners being targeted by insurance companies; Single mothers as an economic issue; Special needs childcare; Medicare; Education; Teenage pregnancy; Sex education; Sexually transmitted Infections; Women's Marches; Homeless women and children; Food insecurity; SNAP benefits; Eviction; Universal healthcare; Planned Parenthood support; Freedoms of the LGBTQ community; Civic education and engagement; "Fake News"; The Living Wage; Access to reproductive healthcare; EOSL funding; Paid family medical leave; Voting in non-presidential elections; Equal pay support; English training for immigrants; Immigrant domestic violence and sexual assault; Women in management; Arts funding cuts; Mental health resources; Climate change; Student loans; human trafficking..... And the list goes on.....

So how do we use our voices to address these issues? As State Commissioners, we look for legislation to support, and we lobby hard for those bills, speaking at hearings and calling legislative offices. We also speak individually to legislators about unaddressed needs, and we create an annual report documenting the testimony from our hearings -- which we hope all legislators will read. We hold an annual Women's Advocacy Day every Spring, when we invite people from across the state to meet with legislators to advocate for women and girls and to tell their stories.

We have a Legislative and Public Policy standing committee which looks at new legislation to advise the full commission on whether to endorse these bills and also whether to make passing the legislation a top priority, since we only have the resources to focus on a few bills at once. Our current list of priority bills includes the following:

S.499/H.536: An Act Advancing Contraception Coverage and Economic Security in our State (ACCESS)

Lead Sponsors: Senator Chandler, Reps. Haddad & Scibak

This bill would improve women's access to contraceptives throughout the Commonwealth.

S.1048/H.2172: An Act Establishing a Family Medical Leave and Temporary Disability Leave Insurance Program

Lead Sponsors: Senator Spilka and Rep. Gordon

This bill establishes employee rights to paid family medical leave or temporary disability leave. Supporters of this bill are in the process of collecting the signatures to put it on the 2018 election ballot if the legislature does not act on it.

I've already spoken about:

An Act Establishing Three New Commissions on the Status of Women and Girls

There's also:

H.3144: An Act Establishing Just Schedules for Employees

Lead Sponsors: Rep. Garballey

This bill establishes employee rights to additional payment if they are not given sufficient advance notice of any changes to their work schedule. The bill protects employees of the retail, fast food and hotel industries in the Commonwealth.

S.545/H.482: An Act Providing for Equitable Coverage in Disability Policies

Lead Sponsors: Senator Lewis, Rep. Balser

This bill would end sex discrimination in state-regulated disability insurance policies.

S.2128: An Act Relative to Healthy Youth

Lead Sponsors: Reps. O'Day & Brodeur

This bill calls for age-appropriate and medically accurate sexual health education in each school district or public school that currently offers sexual health education.

S.788/H.2333: An Act to Protect Girls from Genital Mutilation

Lead Sponsors: Sen. Harriette Chandler & Rep. Sarah Peake

This bill criminalizes the acts of committing FGM on a child or taking a child in or out of the Commonwealth to commit or to permit another to commit FGM. It also creates a duty in mandated reporters to report this as child abuse.

We've had our legislative victories, as well:

An Act Establishing Pay Equity

As chair of the Equal Pay Coalition, the MCSW was thrilled that the most comprehensive pay equity bill in the country was signed into law last session. Effective July 1, 2018, the law requires equal pay for comparable work, provides a definition of comparable work, and encourages employers to conduct internal reviews to ensure equitable compensation. It prevents employers from asking people about their previous salary history in the interview process, and it protects employees from termination for discussing their compensation. Now the focus of the Commission has shifted to conducting trainings on implementation of the new law.

An Act Establishing the Massachusetts Pregnant Workers Fairness Act

Signed into law by the Governor in July of this year, this bill provides safeguards such as requiring reasonable accommodation for employees with the conditions of pregnancy, childbirth and other related aspects. A Western Massachusetts organization, Mother-Woman, was largely responsible for the passage of this bill, which shows the power we can have out here if we all work together!

You can join us for our Women's Advocacy Day in May, but you don't have to wait that long to be heard. Here are some action steps you can take:

Contact your local legislators: remember that your legislators want to hear what you think. It's their job, and they keep that job by continuing to listen to their constituent. You can develop an ongoing relationship with them.

Share your story at one of our public hearings. We do listen and we report to the legislature and the Governor. Compelling stories are often the catalyst for action.

Submit oral or written testimony in favor of one of our legislative priorities or one of your own. Become familiar with the web site of the Massachusetts Legislature: <https://malegislature.gov/> This is a goldmine of information. If you don't have Internet access at home, which many in the region do not, visit the local library!

Write a letter to your local newspaper.

Like us on Facebook: [facebook.com/MassCSW](https://www.facebook.com/MassCSW)

Follow us on Twitter: [@MassCSW](https://twitter.com/MassCSW)

Educate others on the issues you care most about. We have many such opportunities in our daily conversations. Especially make sure that younger women and girls understand the history of discrimination which so many of us have experienced.

Remember, the best way to effect change is to start at the local level, because change and innovation trickle up, not down. Massachusetts has long been an incubator for great ideas that other states will eventually adopt – such as the pay history prohibition in our equal pay legislation. We can only hope that the federal government imitates us!

Get involved with your local government, run for local office or apply for appointment to a local board or committee.

You can make a difference in many ways, and it's not that hard. You just have to speak up and tell your story. You may have to do it more than once. But look around this room and you'll see a whole community of people who are willing to listen.

Thank you all for being here!

** Francia Wisnewski, Remarks to
12th Annual Legislative Breakfast
Franklin County Resource Network
October 6, 2017

Speak Up: Amplifying the Voices of Rural Women and Girls

Good morning, I am honored to be here with all of you, Community members, organizations and legislators. Thank you Community Action for allowing this space to focus on a key priority in our area. Thank you Margo for your information on the Commonwealth Commission on the Status of Women.

Between 6 and 7 am I am also starting my day greeting nine chickens and getting the garden bounty for snacks while I am at work. I am here to talk about the Hampshire- Franklin Commission on the Status of women as an opportunity to improve the lives of women and girls in our region.

I have had great opportunities to interact and support women from diverse backgrounds, to help them find their strength and their voices. It's no news to us that Franklin County has the highest poverty rate in the state.

In 2016 there were 2,993 females head of household, living in the lower income bracket. Many of these women would like to go back to school and increase their odds in the workforce, but their circumstances don't allow a financial capacity to afford education.

Last year 7,299 women over 25 years old, reported earning their high school diploma and 5,317 reported having a Bachelor's degree. Earnings for Franklin County averaged \$38,206. For women, the average is \$32,297 and for women with less than a high school diploma earnings are \$18,315. With a bachelor's degree \$37,937. Men in area average earning \$45,663 and with less than a high school diploma, 20,444.

Other pressing issues: Safe housing, access to quality child care, basic medical care without the worries of high deductibles or expensive medication or just access to reproductive health.

In Franklin County It's easy to be caught in a never ending cycle of poverty and in some case this can become generational, last year 3,037 females were below poverty level.

As citizens of the commonwealth, it's critical to constantly advocate for women's rights, to visit legislators and to keep supporting bills that will make life for women fair and equitable.

We have had opportunities to be visited by the MCSW. Here are the issues that citizens presented in our hearings as constraints in our area:

Social Security for Women:

- women typically earn less than men over a lifetime which means that they are typically able to save less over a lifetime.
- many elderly women have no income other than their social security checks
- the importance of improving the earning potential of younger generations of women so that this cycle does not persist

Access to Other Resources:

- women in Western MA are isolated in many ways: transportation, lack of internet in certain areas, lack of other resources
- even with education, job opportunities are scarce for women in Western MA
- prospects for leadership or science positions for women are especially bleak
- food insecurity is a very real problem for many women and children in Western MA
- the cost of living in Western MA is growing at a much faster rate than the increase in wages
- access to reproductive healthcare including access to abortions is an issue—women in Western MA often lack the transportation required to commute to the nearest facilities that provide abortions

Women's Shelters:

- limited options for women's shelters in Western MA
- victims of domestic abuse often have nowhere to go
- need for transitional housing that is safe
- perhaps co-housing as a possible option for the more rural areas—this has had some success in other states (i.e. Michigan)

Childcare and Early Childhood Education:

- many children in Western MA are from low-income families
- many children live in households whose income could be classified as 100% below the national poverty level
- lack of childcare often prevents parents from finding the work they would need to rise up out of this poverty
- desire for early childhood support for STEM educational resources

Healthcare:

- lack of mental health resources in Western MA
- reduction in resources for healthcare—insurance provides access but not choice
- women cannot always afford their copays

Predatory Mortgage Loans:

- single female heads of households are often targeted for higher rates and worse terms
- foreclosures are a harsh reality for many women

Insurance and Healthcare:

- healthcare expenditures currently make up more than 17% of household income in MA
- there is a need for cost-control measures

Women in Prisons:

- 65% of women imprisoned in the Commonwealth are mothers of children under the age of 18
- there is a need to find a solution so that these primary caregivers can continue to care for their children
 - there could be alternative sentences that utilize job training, counseling, or drug treatment

Child Services:

- an example was provided of a mother whose children were taken away—she found housing but was unable to get her children back due to the fact that her apartment only had a single room; when she became homeless her children were returned
- this clearly demonstrates that the system is broken

Muslim Women in Western MA:

- many Muslim women living in Western MA feel that they are still faced with additional hardships
- some describe difficulties they have faced in the workplace because people do not want to do business with or receive services from them
- there is a desire for legislation that protects these women

Domestic Violence:

- there is currently a lack of state funding for domestic violence prevention
- some groups are trying to develop safety and recovery plans for women in Western MA but are finding that they do not have the resources that they need

This shows a bleak picture, but there is a great momentum of support and collaboration in our area. When women do well in communities we find that communities overall do better. We must work to raise the community standard for everyone.

As regional commissioners, our role is to review the status of women in our communities and make recommendations regarding policies and programs that would increase their opportunities and equity.

I am humbled by how our collective voices could impact change for future generations of women in the commonwealth, and I appreciate the opportunity we have to serve our community.

It is my pleasure to introduce our regional Commissioners:

Denise Brown (Northampton)

Ginetta Candelario (Northampton)

Linda-Jeanne Mack (Easthampton)

Bonnie MacCracken (Amherst)

Keleigh Pereira (Turners Falls)

Marcia Plant Jackson (Leverett)

Chelsea Sunday Kline (Northampton)

Francia Wisniewski (Montague)

Anais Surkin (Greenfield)

Since April 25th, we have been busy participating in an event that strengthens legislation in support of women and girls. We also have been educating ourselves in how to provide strong bonds with our community and how to engage stakeholders in our common journey. Here are some of our potential priorities for the upcoming months:

- Ø Expand statewide leadership, support and empowerment,
- Ø Run public policy groups
- Ø Conduct studies and focus groups
- Ø Engage constituents in reference to the needs of women and girls
- Ø Connect with other commissions to learn best practices and build capacity
- Ø Collect and release data
- Ø Support youth leadership programs
- Ø Keep our area strong for girls and Women
- Ø Ensure inclusion -- that women and girls of color in the community are involved

Please keep us in mind, let's work together and create feasible goals, let's be part of the solution and find pathways to improve the lives of Women and girls. Thank you.

Submitted by Chair Francia Wisniewski on May 30th, 2018.

MetroWest Commission on the Status of Women
Annual Report
May 2018

MetroWest Commissioners

Cathy Ashton- Wayland
Jean Bertschmann- Hopkinton
Stephanie Deeley- Framingham
Patricia Hohl- Framingham
Heather Panahi- Wellesley.
Nancy Rosenblum- Ashland
Ceylan Rowe- Northborough
Denise Schultz- Franklin
Margareth Shepherd- Framingham

Our goal as a Commission, beyond our mission statement as defined in our by-laws, 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, determine 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.

2017-2018 Findings & Accomplishments

Membership:

Cathy Ashton reappointed to a 3 year term

New Members:

Stephanie Deeley
Heather Panahi

Outgoing Members:

Jen Maseda
Heather Wightman

Officers Elected:

Ceylan Rowe, Chair
Nancy Rosenblum, Vice-Chair
Jean Bertschmann, Secretary
Denise Schultz, Director of Legislation
Stephanie Deeley, Director of Communications

Summary: The MetroWest Commission continues it's goal to increase awareness and outreach while advocating for issues identified as our priority issues. The areas include:

Equal Pay
Paid Family & Medical Leave
Women in Transition
Women Running for Office
Affordable Housing
Housing Court
Healthy Relationships-Dating Violence
Healthy Relationship-Sexual Bullying
Sexting
Pipeline to Prison
DV/SA Against Women & Girls
Civil Rights and Safety

The following will detail activities the MWCSW engaged in to reach those goals:

Meetings:

These priority areas were the focus and topics of the Commission's monthly public meetings.

The Commission welcomed former South Middlesex County Corrections Superintendent, Lisa Jackson, to a meeting. Ms. Jackson retired last year, after a long career working with incarcerated women. She worked with former Commissioner Heather Wightman in her role at Ria House.

Superintendent Jackson provided the Commission with a broad overview of women in the criminal justice system: the circumstances; programming; and demographics of women prisoners. The per/offender cost at MCI Framingham per year is \$67,103, as compared to a per/offender cost at SMCC of \$41,860. 28% of inmates at MCI Framingham are pre-trial inmates. The average age is 37. 59% have a sentence of more than 3 years. 52% have a violent governing offense. 32% have lower than a 9th grade reading level. 33% have less than a 6th grade math level. 70% of women have open mental health cases, and 66% are on psychotropic drugs. A recidivism study is done every 3 years. The last one was in 2015, and indicated that the recidivism rate for inmates released from lower security was 23%, and from medium or high security was 33%, underscoring the benefit of a transition to lower security prior to release. The average length of stay at MCI Framingham was 938 days; at SMCC it was 200 days. The challenges of the work program through SMCC include finding transportation and appropriate placements. The Department of Corrections has strict requirements regarding appropriate placements and payment for inmates. Inmates who participate are able to be released having earned money to get them started on a new path. Cost of commissary items within the prison are higher than market rates.

Superintendent Jackson suggested several possible courses of action for the Commission to support:

- Alternatives to Incarceration: Drug Courts; diversion programs; Mental Health Courts.
- Diversion to community-based treatment programs, with trauma-informed training.
- Revise the bail system.
- Expand the use of probation.
- Expand employment opportunities for pre-release women.

She stressed that changes happen slowly, person-to-person, and the importance of continuing to try to highlight the challenges for this population.

Survey Results:

In 2017 we conducted a survey to the women in our region.

77 women responded. A few questions we asked were:

1. Please check the top THREE issues you see as the greatest barriers to your personal economic stability.

Answers: Cost of high education, cost of healthcare, and low retirement savings.

2. Please list the top THREE issues you see as the greatest barriers to your personal health and wellness:

Answers: Medical costs and/or health insurance too expensive, health insurance deductibles too high, and lack of mental health services and lack of affordable housing were tied.

3. Which of the following issues would you consider taking action to change? Please check up to THREE.

Answers: Affordable higher education, equal pay for equal work, and affordable health care.

Legislative Advocacy & Awareness

Legislative Priorities include:

Housing Court Expansion S.946 (Sen. Spilka) / H.978 (Rep. Walsh)

Protect Access to Confidential Healthcare (PATCH) S.591 (Sen. Spilka) / H.2960 (Rep. Hogan)

Girl's Bill S.49 (Sen. Forry)/H.119 (Rep. Tyler)

Campus Climate Surveys H.2998 (Rep. Ehrlich)

Sexual Violence on Higher Education Campuses S.706 (Sen. Moore) / H.632 (Reps. Farley-Bouvier and Donahue)

Compliance with Anti-Shackling Law for Pregnant Incarcerated Women S.1359 (Sen. Spilka) / H.2494 (Rep. Khan)

Protect the Civil Rights and Safety of All Massachusetts Residents (Safe Communities) S.1305 (Sen. Eldridge, Sen. Lewis, Rep. Lewis) / H.3269 (Rep. Matias)

Transmitting Indecent Visual Depictions by Teens H.948 (Rep. Roy)

Supporting Working Parents Who Run for Public Office (Child care tax credit for candidates) S. 386 (Sen. Jehlen)/ H.2898 (Reps. Connolly and Meschino)

There were great successes in the 190th Session Massachusetts General Court. These included:

Protect Access to Confidential Healthcare (PATCH): The MWCSW celebrated the passage of PATCH in February 2018. This bill fixes a crucial barrier to accessing health care by ensuring that when multiple people are on the same insurance plan, confidential health care information is not shared with anyone other than the patient.

ACCESS S.499 (Sen. Chandler)/ H.536 (Reps. Haddad and Scibak): The MWCSW celebrated the passage of ACCESS in November 2017. The bill ensures that Massachusetts residents continue to have access to affordable birth control by requiring state insurers to cover birth control without a copay.

Housing Court Expansion (S.946 H. 978) Sen Karen Spilka and Rep. Chris Walsh

Currently, 1/3 of the population in MA has no access to Housing Court. That includes several towns in the MetroWest. In Framingham, the largest town in the MetroWest, just over 45% of the homes are rental homes in a town of nearly 70,000 people.

Housing Court helps both tenants and landlords. It has the expertise in federal, state and local laws and the specialists who can mediate these often complicated cases.

Imagine how complicated housing issues can be for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking; issues that include no contact orders, the ability to change locks, early lease termination for victims who need to flee violence, and situations where domestic violence victims are evicted because they've called police one too many times... the result being that these victims don't call police so as not to make trouble, so as not to get evicted.

We need specialists and mediators well versed in federal and state protections in these areas. But as of now, ***a victim's chances of staying safe can depend upon what town he/she lives in.***

The Housing Court has judges and staff with expertise in housing law and who are trained to provide tenants and landlords with a fair court process. Both landlords and tenants can access the resources that only Housing Courts have, including the Tenancy Preservation Program, Lawyer for the Day Programs and Housing Specialists. Homeless can be prevented and municipalities can address serious housing and health code violations more efficiently and effectively.

The current situation creates **unequal access** to state services. It is difficult to understand why 2/3 of the state should have access to the expertise and programs of Housing Court while 1/3 of our state does not. S.946 will change this inherently unfair system, making Housing Court accessible to all the citizens of Massachusetts – not just some citizens.

On July 17, 2017, the FY18 budget expanded the housing court to all remaining unserved cities and towns and the Governor quickly announced vacancies for two housing court judges. Most recently, the Senate Ways & Means Committee budget included full funding for the housing court expansion and an increase in the Tenancy Protection Program and the Governor has nominated new housing court judges.

Testimony:

Healthy Youth: Commissioner and Legislative Director, Denise Schultz, represents the MWCSW on the Healthy Youth Coalition. Denise testified of the Healthy Youth Bill S.234 (Sen. Spilka) /H.2053 (Rep. O'Day).

Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML): Commissioner Denise Schultz represents the MWCSW on the PFML Coalition. Denise testified of PFML hearing.

Transmitting Indecent Visual Depictions by Teens: Commissioner Denise Schultz testified on November 28, 2017 to the Committee the importance of bill H.948 (Rep. Roy).

Communications:

The MWCSW currently has 330 people following us on Facebook. We had over 150 people attend our events in 2017. We are building and expanding our email subscriber list. We look forward to growing our social media presence and outreach.

Public Outreach and Awareness:

On July 28, 2017 Commissioners Cathy Ashton, Denise Schultz, Margareth Shepard, Nancy Rosenblum, and Ceylan Rowe attended a tour of MCI Framingham, hosted by Rep. Jack Lewis, and also attended by Senator Karen Spilka and Rep. Carolyn Dykema. The tour was led by the Government Relations Liaison, Superintendent, and Deputy Superintendent for the prison. Several programs were highlighted that included Cosmetology, Culinary Arts, College courses, America's Vet Dogs, and Transitional Housing Program.

There is a 33% recidivism rate. Some potential follow up suggestions are more educational programming through Framingham State and other institutions, expand services for pre-trial detainees, and offer more programs where woman can obtain employment after being released.

In July, Commissioners Patricia Hohl and Jen Maseda met with Sigma Sorority. They are interested in upcoming election voter information and registration.

November 14, 2017 Commissioners Nancy Rosenblum, Ceylan Rowe, and Margareth Shaperd attended the Semi-Annual Convening of Regional Commissions. There was a discussion regarding common challenges facing all commissions in terms of websites, funding for events, obtaining a PO Box, and a lack of ability to fundraise.

October 16, 2017, the MWCSW hosted a Teen Sexting Forum at Franklin High School. Senator Karen Spilka, Representative Jeff Roy, Professor Elizabeth Englander, Officer Christopher Spillane, members of the Algonquin SheHawks (feminist high school club,) Franklin Public Schools Superintendent attended the event.

Under existing law, the two options available are to do nothing, or to charge a minor with a felony and a sex offender classification, which frequently seems unduly punitive given the circumstances. The bill introduced by Representative Roy would create a misdemeanor offense for minors, and give the District Attorney's office the option to offer diversion and education programs which, if completed, would eliminate the record. The bill does not prevent consensual sexting, but would address the unauthorized distribution of the sext.

He is working with Dr. Englander's team to create an education program to be offered to districts through the Department of Education.

Professor Englander works at the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center, at Bridgewater State University. She and her team are studying the effects of sexting. The long term effects are unknown, given the recent genesis of the issue. They are continuing to study the emotional trauma caused in the immediate term by the victims. Her research is indicating that the unauthorized distribution of the sext and the ramifications from that are often more traumatic than the original incident. She described the pressure on children to engage in sexting, as well as the difference in perspective between teens and adults regarding appropriate privacy of body parts.

Dr. Englander feels that Representative Roy's bill offers an opportunity for education. There are online resources available through MARC to help parents have conversations regarding healthy relationships, family values, and privacy. Although there are some technology fixes available, most have too many work-arounds that teens can utilize.

Officer Spillane mentioned teens use existing images to leverage victims into providing more images, and described some of the technology teens use in hiding these pictures from adult view on their phones. He said that schools can help address these issues through curricula and peer mentoring programs.

May 2, 2018 the MWCSW hosted a public hearing at the Framingham Library. We heard and read testimony on issues related to affordable housing, equal pay, special education, online bullying, harassment toward undocumented women, elder services, employment training for women at MCI Framingham, immigration lawyers not providing services after receiving payments, and lack of respect from some healthcare providers towards women.

2018 Focus & Strategy

PRIORITY LEGISLATION

Housing Court Expansion S.946 (Sen. Spilka) / H.978 (Rep. Walsh)

Campus Climate Surveys H.2998 (Rep. Ehrlich)

Sexual Violence on Higher Education Campuses S.706 (Sen. Moore) / H.632 (Reps. Farley-Bouvier and Donahue)

Compliance with Anti-Shackling Law for Pregnant Incarcerated Women S.1359 (Sen. Spilka) / H.2494 (Rep. Khan)

Protect the Civil Rights and Safety of All Massachusetts Residents (Safe Communities) S.1305 (Sen. Eldridge, Sen. Lewis, Rep. Lewis) / H.3269 (Rep. Matias)
Transmitting Indecent Visual Depictions by Teens H.948 (Rep. Roy)
Supporting Working Parents Who Run for Public Office (Child care tax credit for candidates) S. 386 (Sen. Jehlen)/ H.2898 (Reps. Connolly and Meschino)

SUPPORTED LEGISLATION

Healthy Youth S.234 (Sen. DiDomenico)/ H.2053 (Rep. O'Day)
Paid Family Medical Leave S.1048 (Sen. Spilka)/ H.2172 (Rep. Gordon)
Preventing the Sexual Abuse of Children and Youth S.295 (Sen. Lovely)
An Act to promote homelessness protection in MA S.831 Sen. DiDomenico / H.968 (Rep. Tyler)
An Act to strengthen laws combating human trafficking and protecting survivors of modern-day slavery S.905 (Sen. Montigny)
Enhancing the Lives of Survivors of Human Trafficking S.906 (Sen. Montigny) / H.766 (Rep. Day)
An Act to prevent human trafficking and sexual exploitation in bodyworks establishments S.907 (Sen. Montigny)
An Act to Keep Siblings Together S.75 (Sen. Spilka)
Protecting Girls from Genital Mutilation S.788 (Sen. Chandler)/ H.2333 (Rep. Peake)

In addition to it's legislative advocacy, the Commission is focused on the following areas for the upcoming year:

Teen Sexting
Salary Negotiation
Workplace Equality
Safe Communities Act
Education
Violence and Abuse on Campus
Safety & Wellbeing
Healthcare

Goals for 2018

Increase awareness and advocate for issues identified as our prior areas of focus.
Connect organizations in the Metro West with each other.
Create an ongoing list of Community Leaders.
Increase awareness of MWCSW through social media, hosting events, attending events, and creating brochures to leave in public spaces.

Submitted on May 7th, 2018 by Ceylan Rowe, Chair, MetroWest CSW



Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women

Annual Report

May 2018

Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women ~ Members

Chantel Bethea ~ Worcester

Cathleen Liberty ~ Worcester

Mary Burns ~ Sturbridge

Irene Rodriguez- Hernandez ~Gardner

Amy Ebbeson ~ Rutland

Judith Ockene ~ Harvard

Randi Zanca ~Northbridge

Joann Stemmermann ~ Bolton

The following were nominated and elected as officers:

Chantel Bethea ~ Chair

Amy Ebbeson ~ Vice Chair

Cathleen Liberty ~ Secretary (note taker)

Advisory Board Members

Robin Currie ~ Worcester

Courtney Ross Esobar ~ Worcester

Talia Gallagher ~ Worcester

Jacqueline McLean ~ Shrewsbury

Fiona LaRosa-Waters ~ Cambridge

Angelique Bouthot ~ Worcester

Eve Gilmore ~ Berlin

Purpose:

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 Worcester County Commission on that Status of Women is to act as a permanent centralizing force and effective voice in the County of Worcester to ensure the equal status of women of every race, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, national origin, ability, age and sexual orientation in educational, economic, political, health, legal, and social spheres including the provision of information, referrals, and

guidance. The commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the full enjoyment of life for all women throughout their lives.

Membership:

We had two members step down due to work and commitment level of the commission. We have filled those two positions with Mary Burns of Sturbridge, and Melissa Byrne of Shrewsbury.

Melissa Byrne on March 12th had to resign for personal reasons.

We are now looking to fill one seat on the commission.

Hearings/Public Forums:

The Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women will be holding different public forums throughout Worcester County every year.

We had our first on “The Trauma of Sexual Assault from a Male and Female Perspective” at the Boys and Girls of Worcester on Sept 11th 2017. We had guest speakers Nikki Bell of LIFT (Living In Freedom Together) and Stephen Montagna of Violence Prevention and Social Justice Activist and Educator



We had our “Prescription Drug Public Forum” on Oct 16th 2017 we had the District Attorney Joe Early collaborate with us. We had people drive up from New York to hear the concerns of this huge topic. Misuse of prescription drugs means taking a medication in a manner or dose other than prescribed; taking someone else’s prescription, even if for a legitimate medical complaint such as pain; or taking a medication to feel euphoria (i.e., to get high)
Opioids—usually prescribed to treat pain Central nervous system [CNS] depressants (this category includes tranquilizers, sedatives, and hypnotics)—used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders

Stimulants—most often prescribed to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

PUBLIC FORUM that will highlight the concerns of the public.

Specifically, CSW would like to hear testimony on personal experiences with the misuse of prescription drugs.

Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women

Recovery High School
20 Rockdale St, Worcester, MA

Monday
October 16, 2017
5:30pm—7:30pm

Prescription Drug Public Forum
In Collaboration with the Worcester County Sheriff's Office

Misuse of prescription drugs means taking a medication in a manner or dose other than prescribed; taking someone else's prescription, even if for a legitimate medical complaint such as pain; or taking a medication to feel euphoria (i.e., to get high)

- Opioids—usually prescribed to treat pain
- Central nervous system (CNS) depressants (this category includes tranquilizers, sedatives, and hypnotics)—used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders
- Stimulants—most often prescribed to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

ALL members of the community are invited to attend and speak at this PUBLIC FORUM that will highlight the concerns of the public.

Specifically, CSW would like to hear testimony on personal experiences with the misuse of prescription drugs.

Oral and written testimony will be accepted. Open to the public

Additional Activities:

Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women held their 2nd Annual Legislative Breakfast September 25th 2017

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



Worcester County CSW partnered with the Racial Justice Task Force of the YWCA for the Fall Forum: Taking a Hard Look at Feminism Through a Racial Lens

What does it mean to identify as a feminist? Are women of color and white women defining it differently? How have women of color and white women experienced the "women's movement" differently? What role does race play in advancing gender equity? What role does gender play in advancing racial equity?

Join us as a diverse group of local female academics, community organizers, public servants, and legal and media professionals reflect on these and other questions.

Moderated by Dr. Nicole Overstreet of Clark University

Panelists:

Dr. Cara Lisa Berg-Powers, Executive Director of Transformative Culture Project



Conclusion:

This year's findings demonstrated that the women of Worcester County have a lot of work to do to achieve the potential and full equality of all women. The most pressing issue is the war on drugs for women; the lack of services, mental health for women and their children, and beds for those trying to become better in their communities.

Priority Issues identified:

Mental health

Health care navigation, available services, transportation to services, appeal process when service is denied

Substance abuse

Eating disorders

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
Seniors
Veterans

Goals for 2018 - 2019

Hold more public forums in the surrounding cities and towns in Worcester County.

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.

Maintain regular contact with our legislators and officials on issues that concern women that have been identified as our priority areas of focus.

Continue to collaborate with other organizations, and public officials, in order to support women and girls through public awareness.

Work closely with our sister commissions on implementing and developing best practices for the betterment of each commission.

Work on writing and proposing new state level legislative policies for women.

Attend community events and share literature about the commission to promote awareness of our role and work to increase involvement in our activities.

Submitted on May 15th 2018, by Chantel Bethea, Chair of the Worcester County CSW

APPENDIX

A. 2017/2018 Regional Public Hearing Notes

Westfield

Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women Regional Public Hearing in Westfield

October 24, 2017, 4:30-6:30pm

Westfield State University, Horace Mann Center, Westfield

Caty Simon, Holyoke. Caty came with the Tapestry people. She runs a media outlet by and for sex workers called “Tits and Sass.” She is a sex workers’ rights advocate. She said the voices of sex workers are not allowed in the dialogue, and they are blocked from legitimate employment, housing and education. They are subject to rape and harassment by police. There’s a criminal charge, “Common Nightwalker,” which lets them put sex workers in jail for the weekend, even though they may be let out without charges later on. The police also use condoms as evidence: if a woman is carrying three or more condoms, it is considered evidence of prostitution. If the woman is addicted and thrown in a cell, she may die during withdrawal. Often, when sex workers work with friends for safety, they are convicted of trafficking. Also, losing their online advertising platform means they are driven underground and become more vulnerable out. Clients take them to remote spots to negotiate. Sex work has been pathologized rather than being considered a choice – a bad choice among many bad options. Criminalization causes women not to report abuse/violence. We need to listen to them, rather than telling them what they need.

Shanna Fishnel, Northampton. She grew up in Israel, went to Smith School for Social Work, is now volunteering at Tapestry Health, working with sex workers. We need to include the marginalized population. Sex work is stigmatized, even though it’s not really a choice because there are few options. She spoke about Springfield and Holyoke women being arrested for walking alone at night, and if a woman is carrying more than three condoms, this is criminalized. Then she is forced back into sex work to pay the fines. They cannot get housing or work. Police should not be arresting these women. There’s a huge learning curve on how to be an appropriate service provider for these women. Service for them is not prioritized. Sex workers are not criminals, and we need to provide funding to community organization, housing, and other services. When the MCSW does their work, they must bring sex workers into the conversation. First the laws on “Common Nightwalking” and “Condoms as Evidence” must be eradicated. The solution is not to retaliate against sex workers.

Morgan O’Connor, Westfield. She is a Girl Scout and a 15-year-old student at Westfield Technical Academy. She said she wanted to address the question: Why do girls shy away from leadership. Peer pressure is a big element on every aspect of life. Girls are sensitive to peer pressure and are afraid of messing up and are afraid to be judged. The idea that men are superior to women pressures women to not feel very good. Dress codes in school cause girls to have to alter what they wear, or else they are accused of “distracting” the boys. Girls don’t want to be seen as negative, so they cannot be who they are. They decide to be someone they’re not. She, herself, is called “scary.” She ran unsuccessfully twice for class president and was told, “You don’t take anything. You’re pretty scary.” She has asked girls why they don’t go toward leadership roles, and they reply that they don’t know. They just accept what they’re told. If you want to change the world, you have to address it! We should tell girls not to accept life how it is, but make it what you want. Another reason is how girls are raised – their parents, siblings. If we encourage mothers to do a lot, kids learn by example. Her mom runs four Girl Scout troops. Kids need to be pushed. “Popular” girls are

putting up a façade.

Dana Carnegie, Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts. The Legislative agenda needs to promote economic opportunities. She spoke about the G.I.R.L. agenda, which encourages girls to form their own ideas and become leaders and advocate for what's important to them. The G.I.R.L. agenda is non-partisan, about civic engagement. To become a go-getter, innovator, risk-taker, and leader. It gives girls the opportunity to engage more girls in civic action. Information at: girlagenda.org.

Commissioner Liz Friedman asked about sexual harassment of girls. After recent events, "me too" was tweeted over a million times in 24 hours. Dana answered that Girl Scouts teaches girls to stick up for themselves and to say "no." It also gives girls another adult to go to.

Lisette, Tapestry Health needle exchange program. She is the mother of five. She recently had a 14-year-old girl ask her for Plan B. She does "harm reduction" for women who are struggling with addiction. She sees how much trauma these women have losing their kids over and over. She has lost two friends to overdoses this year. There used to be long-term recovery programs, but today it's 7-10 days in detox, then people end up on the street, homeless. The children go into the system where they're abused. She wants to speak for these women, who have nowhere to go and thus go back to what they know. A lot of low income, minority women (like herself) don't have the empowerment of Girl Scouts. She has a daughter in college who will have to leave because of money, coming back home to attend community college instead. "Harm reduction" is learning to do things safely. She meets the women where they're at. She does outreach as well.

Morgan Witherell, Westfield State University student. She spoke about the situation her aunt is in as the result of her aunt's husband going to jail over abuse of her cousin. The cousin feels guilty over reporting her father. Her aunt was vilified in the paper and had to shut down her last source of income, a day care center. Now she cannot pay the mortgage or utility bills. She raised the question: "What happens when the abuser is the breadwinner?" Is there any way to get temporary assistance? She also spoke about a couple who were arrested in Northampton for protesting. DCF is holding their kids hostage, while they are dealing with both Massachusetts and Kentucky, where they are from. They are currently homeless, living in a tent. Her question is: How do we cut through the red tape?

Tory Rosen, Northampton. She is a social justice activist. She spoke about what might come out of this gathering and asked us to think about where these ideas might have the most success. The regional commissions are an opportunity to get knowledge out there. There are going to be places where there is push-back, so do we have a way of keeping records of outcomes? Data is important, and we can get this from the regions.

Shaitia Spruell, Springfield. She is 24, has a 5-year-old child, was a teen mom. She graduated from Baypath and now works for the Office of Economic Empowerment. She cares about the work she does, and there are not a lot of leadership opportunities for girls in Springfield. She's a mentor. She spoke about the fact that when girls go to the nurse at Putnam High School, they have to pay for their toiletries. There had to be a drive to raise money for tampons, but they don't have to pay for condoms. She herself has issues around housing. She has been looking for months.

Sheyenne Capella, Springfield, originally from Puerto Rico. She is tired of fighting society's rules about her school dress code. When they were in second grade, students were shown pictures of what they should not look like – one of a black boy, and one of a black girl. The dress code is a factor in the rape culture. She spoke about three UV's (uniform violations) that put her in in-house suspension. Her goal is to get rid of the whole dress code because it enforces the rape culture that women's bodies are a com-

modity. You don't have to be modest to be respectable. And the rape culture starts in second grade.

Cristie Monscott, Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts. She works with a group of young women age 12-24, a few of which are present.

Danielle Enteres (?), YWCA. She asked us how she can affect education policy. How can she affect education policy? Who is qualified to do it. Particularly interested in identity formation, financial literacy, life skills, and interpersonal skills. Ellen Morehouse is building program with her, she is a star in young women's initiative.

Commissioner Maria Puppolo suggested get "feet wet", attending city council meetings, getting to know people so she can find out what is happening in her city or town.

Lowell

Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women Regional Public Hearing in Lowell

January 23rd, 2018, 4:30-6:30pm

Lowell Telecommunication Corp, Lowell

Margot Parrot opening remarks. Introduction to Representative Tsongas.

Representative Tsongas speaks on the importance of women in public office and sexual assault in the military. When women aren't at the table, they remain underrepresented in life. It is fundamental that women seek public office. This week Time reported on the surge in first-time candidates to state level political office. It is not rocket science, but it is a lot of hard work. Women can't win unless they are in the race. Thanks the commission, and asks them to consider how women's participation at the table needs to and can change.

Lucas Skorczeski

Acre Family Childcare

Family childcare company. Many women working with them are becoming financially independent. But in spite of this, educators we work with face biases. Childcare is a highly regulated industry. Agencies critique your home. Owners are fearful of complaints because they lead to a shut down. Children are guilty until proven innocent. Family childcare companies work with the most vulnerable, people using subsidized housing, low wages, experiencing domestic violence. What happens to these women's business and homes, if a spouse is deported? How can they advocate for themselves if English is their second language? Thanks to Department of Early Education and Care for upping the wages for early care works.

Sarah Schnorr asks question: is the problem bigger than just money available? Regulations? Is the regulatory environment that invasive?

Lucas says yes. Regulations are intense and grow. Not just about money. They get their trash searched. Basic level of respect gets missed because it is considered women's work. He is here because all of the women he works with are still working!

Penny Blaisdell asks what can we do? What legislation?

Lucas says need increased funding for Department of Early Education and Care. Concern is, as wages goes up, access to vouchers or help becomes restricted to certain demographics.

Mary-dith Tuitt speaks. If single mom or two parent household, if they are on a voucher system and get extra hours at work do their childcare vouchers get cut?

Ultimately Lucas would want a universal Pre-K. He is frustrated because brain science is decades old, but sticker price scares away legislators.

Ruth Bramson asks if you get funding from corporations?

Majority of funding comes from the state. They rely on grants and philanthropic streams, but there are more non-profits now, so funding has become competitive.

Tristan Huynh

Freshman in high school

Talks about feminism, likens it to a battle of the sexes. We may not be born equal, but we can die equal. In school they learn about historical figures, but with no focus on women. Thinks it would be cool to focus on women in history.

Mary-dith adds that Tristan can be that leader. We need to talk more about a variety of historical figure; those who mightn't have been "pure" enough, those who had to dress up as a man, and immigrant women.

Becca adds that Tristan could go to school board and request to learn about more women.

Melanie Brown

High school teacher

Domestic violence survivor. State policy negatively affected her situation with her ex-husband. Here to advocate for legislation regarding sexual assault by Rep. Christine Barber. She is building consultancy services to work with teachers to build mindful teaching in the classroom. Works with many vulnerable people, undocumented people, many of whom were "coyoted" into the country without their parents. Started a relationship with a co-worker, very slowly after her last negative relationship. She dis-

covered he had completely lied too. He has another life. Her consent was under complete fraud. If it was a business exchange, there would be recourse, why isn't there in her situation? Asks why can a woman's humanity and vulnerability be used as a weapon against her. Not fair that women just "should have known". Also states public health issues leads to depression and opioid addiction. Perhaps something like "sexual violation through fraud" could be a good bill. Peter Cotosit's rape bill of 2010 failed because it was too broad. When did victims become accusers?

Becca Glenn will follow up with Christine Barber.

Penny thinks she should publish her testimony as an article.

Nina's friend in NYT editor of gender section, so will connect Melanie with her! And adds, it is interesting that you have redefined what consent is.

Melanie also spoke about the right, human way to heal opioid addiction. Give them a reason to live. See Johann Hari's work on opioid addiction.

Soady Ouch

Lowell Alliance

Cambodian testifier. Talked about the patriarchal society in Cambodia. Women only can stay in the home. Difficult to share stories, as shy culturally.

Mary-dith connects her with her friend Chin Chi who runs a non-profit that encourages Asian women to become involved, get educated, and use their voices.

Molyka Tieng

Lowell Community Health Center

Lowell Health Center, housing possibility worker testifier, spoke about housing needs.

Christina MacLeod

Girls Inc.

Asked about advocacy day. Says lack of mentors for women in the workplace is a key reason why they don't go on to higher levels. If one girl has one champion, it makes all the difference. Requests the commissioners mentor young girls in their own lives. There is a young girls program (age 5-12) and teen program (13-18).

Penny is going to contact Girls Inc Executive Director to reach out.

Mary-dith works with Girls Inc at Girls Summit. Connect with Essex regional commission to partner.

Sarah la Cour recommends trying to get in touch with female business owners, because it is a wonderful thing for girls to see.

Gloria Polites

Lowell Women's Week

Women's week is Feb-March. Jackie Malone is keynote speaker. Tsongas will be there. Theme is "nevertheless we persist; moving forward together". Located online at lowellwomensweek.org. Thinking Out Loud is a show that Gloria hosts. Can be found at ltc.org and on Channel 8.

Lauren MacIsaac

Lowell Boys and Girls Club

Asks Mary to do workshop with teen girls.

New Bedford

Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women Regional Public Hearing in New Bedford

February 27th, 2018, 4:30-6:30pm

New Bedford Public Library, New Bedford

Pamela McLeod, The Women's Center

What DO women want? We know, in spite of what men assume (that we don't). access to education, access to affordable child-care. Runs the Women Center – sexual assault center – women need freedom from sexual assault. Time to move beyond title nine. Time to prepare to inevitable backlash to #metoo, which is already occurring. Told it breathes fear in men, used as an excuse to keep women out of workplace and off teams, afraid men will be accused. Men know what to do, and they know how to behave. If you question something you do or say – don't do it or say it. From legislators we need laws that protect us and allow us to keep our bodies for ourselves. End to a society that trivializes and objectifies women – time's up. We need men as allies, they are still in charge in politics, we need your help to achieve change. What do we want? A world where no other woman has to say #metoo.

Mary-dith, we're still in suffrage 100 years on.

Margot, legislative committee spoke solely on sexual assault and planning to dedicate another meeting, twice as long next month.

Jean Fox, thanks Pamela for her incredible community work.

Maria Forts, C. Social Justice

Working with raise up, paid family medical leave, trying to raise to \$15 the minimum raise. On paid leave: Women more likely to leave job for caregiving duties. For rapidly aging population we need paid leave now so children don't suffer for looking after their parents. After paid leave came to California, women were 13% more likely to reenter workforce. On minimum wage: nearly 2/3 of mass min wage workers are women. Women are over represented in industries with low wages – cleaning, fast food industries. A legacy of women's work being less valued, but we can fix by increasing minimum wage – particularly women of color. Social worker for career. Sees women striving, wanting to work, need to get paid more, often times they are single mothers, head of household.

Becca, important to hear from other people that they value paid leave, beyond just us 19 commissioners.

Margot, knows Michelle from commission, appreciates what you do.

Jean, knows Maria, has a unified voice which is important to advance legislation. You advocate for under educated single moms and they need a voice.

Charles Smiles

Obviously not a woman, but status of women is status of half the world and our community, and affects me and is just as important and affects their children. If people are not already following closely or considering how people are going to be categorized in the 2020 census, encourage everyone to find experts to advise. Terribly critical as policymakers like stats and if we don't create them, we fall off the chart. Stats from 2010 US census: Of families with households in NB with kids under 18, 12,000 of these families. 46% of households have a husband and wife. 44% headed by a woman without a male spouse present. 10% headed by a man without a female spouse. To me this highlights the need you all know about. We need to spend more energy thinking about the households where there is one parent and the needs of daycare, aftercare, pre-k, and of those who don't speak English. Approx. 40% of NB school households are Hispanic. Almost 30% households are not English language speaking. Boys and girls club and other fantastic organizations but it is not enough and tends to age out. There are also a number of for-profit child-care. There isn't enough and it isn't coordinated enough, especially with reference to outreach. Also, heard about crisis in home health care – affects women on both ends. Most people looking for nursing homes are women and it is extremely unaffordable.

Margot, her field is elder law, and it is a ticking time bomb. Going into immigrant communities and deporting them is not the answer.

Sara, ma is one of most expensive states and expensive childcare rates. Needs of women across the state are large. Certain women are invisible on Beacon Hill.

Jean Fox, A few years ago worked together on women's taskforce. If you can find childcare, it is so difficult, even if middle class families, to pay for that childcare.

Cyndi Couto, Program Director of PACE

Covers 39 towns. Childcare rates, anywhere from 50-125 dollars a day. Waitlist of 10,000 children. MA is second most expensive state for childcare – Washington DC is first. PACE is a non-profit agency, funded by department of blank. Advocating for more money, as paying staff 11-13 dollars an hour. Her own staff can't afford childcare. Desperate for 15 dollar minimum. Even when families come off waitlist they are considered income eligible. Even if you are getting a subsidy, childcare is so expensive. She doesn't understand how anyone pays for childcare privately. Need to educate young women of mass. Losing staff to go to JTA, travelling further so they are away from their kids but getting paid more. The subsidy doesn't cover what they pay teacher. We depend them to take care of our children. PACE pre-screens, and tries to get everyone on the waitlist as it may be years before you are called.

Becca, what would any of the effects be of the very poorest folks with the legislation that would reduce from 90 to 85%. Cyndi says if they raise the level any more, women will have to stay home with their kids – we can't go backwards.

Sara, if state does not commensurately increase funding for the voucher program, who on the waitlist will get helped? They'll have to wait even longer.

Mary-dith, if they got more hours they'd get kicked out of their daycare. So women didn't want more hours so they wouldn't lose childcare. If you're only getting six weeks paid leave, you have six weeks without pay before you can get your child into childcare, it is a vicious cycle.

Christine Szuszkiewicz, Dartmouth

Privileged but still housing instability is experienced. Would like to live in somewhere where she doesn't have to move – four years until her son finishes high school, but they wanted to do construction, so she was evicted. Another landlord divorced, and wife got property, so she had to move again. Has been renting for over thirty years so should have great record, but if you go to get a place they look on some system and it looks like evictions were filed when they weren't actually – they just had to leave. She is a good tenant, clean, pays on time. Thinks AG should address the problem of eviction notices. Also thinks we need to get more radical, all these companies getting a 15% tax cut. Are unions thinking about asking? Also suggested that everyone bands together to pay credit cards on last day. Also, MA has a clause in which companies can charge high credit card rates – is there anything that can be done about that? Education?

Mary-dith, think about your situation and then those in disenfranchised communities in the same situation. We need change. Imagine a woman in Dorchester who gets served an eviction notice, they have no credit or bad credit, and young woman with child trying to get an apartment in community where they – Mass exodus. They leave mass to live elsewhere where they have a more sustainable way of life. We don't work for anyone else except the women and girls of mass. When are struggling in MA, and the struggle is not just for disenfranchised communities either.

Waltham, Becca is a resident there, makes more than normal wage and still struggles.

Rebecca, thanks for pointing out area we can do better with, She is going to look into different ways to help renters. The AG has a consumer protection office where you can call and receive assistance with legal solutions for landlord issues.

Sara, when her daughter and her boyfriend were arrested, she was in court system for three years, her record was expunged. A year ago applied for a job, but her criminal record showed up. Most tenants who get eviction notice against them, settle. They

can't afford a lawyer. What you need to do is get is get the landlord to end lawsuit.

Testifier also had a man exert power over her by threatening her with racy pictures of her that she didn't realize he had. Brookline PD officers came to her place to investigate and chased her around the apartment. Had a horrible experience. Happy for #metoo that it has liberated her ability to talk about this sexual assault incident.

Heidi Sylvia Brooks,

Former unsung heroine. School principal, she gets a lot on her desk from single parents, predominantly single mothers, trying to get childcare, advocating for children that have been abused and neglected. Having a human and health class in high and middle school is too left. Another "Laurent and co" (??) Joanne Peterson organization for those dealing with substance abuse. Her daughter is a heroine user, and she is one of the 10,000 on the pace waitlist. Has to pay 2000 a week for her daughters care. Her daughter is 13 months clean. She is working and regaining self-worth every day. Testifier still has custody. She knows about #metoo in the suburbs. Laurent and co supports families through their journey of many different types of addictions, in Florida and many over mass. What she has learned – it is a disease, not a choice. The chemical allergy that physically makes her want to be high is no longer a choice. It doesn't affect her siblings, and so 50% of her granddaughters genetics too. We need to do this for ourselves, and our grandchildren. Need access to more long term care, and beds. Women get 1/3 the beds in long term care than men do.

Margot, this affects every single family in mass. Has a son-in-law with that issue. Lives in north central mass where heroin addiction is a massive issue. Legislature is trying to do something Thanks for using your voice.

Mary-dith, clinic in Dorchester – commonwealth care clinic, by Leah Randolph. 30 years clean. Your daughter should get her name in there, just to keep in contact. This disease is a day-by-day process. In the disenfranchised communities couldn't afford heroine, but addicts live in the area – methadone mile in Dorchester. Day to day for you also, prayers are with you.

Erica Scott, Fall River

Live and works in Fall River. Lack of representation in women in local leadership. Article "Local politics a boys club for many reasons" – why was only on women elected to city councilor and none on school council? This year is the year for women, women of color taking leadership in Framingham, Taunton has three women in city council, NB has 5. Why does fall river only have one? There are 28 gateway cities, former manufacturing background, low educational attainment, Fall river are in the 20th percentile with women in office. Article interviewed women that ran unsuccessfully. Uniformly they had cyber bullying, you're not a qualified candidate because you don't have a car, a working mom, a single mom – things that target them by gender specifics. She serves on board of several social justice organizations. Toxic environment for women running for office. Thinks if there was training on healthy relationships starting in middle and high school, things would be different in Fall river. Looking for an environment with less toxic masculinity. Fall River is the tenth poorest city in the commonwealth. Often times not thought of, because we are predominantly of Portuguese heritage, that is changing and as people move out of Boston metro area and moving to fall river, we need to address this and have female voices heard.

Becca, said inbox her on facebook because women running for office is her day job.

Mary-dith, wants to be in on the conversation. Need to talk to mayor. Women are voters so why is there not more women in office. They voted 45 in...

Jean Fox, you do have Carole Fiola as state rep, and she works for Pat Haddad who is another woman in power.

Margot, she ran for office and experienced negative backlash. But more women are stepping up and there will ultimately be a critical mass of us, so keep the faith.

Amy-Marie Blanchette, Fall River

Ran for fall river school committee, everything she said is true. Works in welcome center of community college, and three dimensional needs to students like homelessness and blank. She has had four students come to her regarding homelessness this week, that is a lot and there is a lot more not coming. Two were women and displaced by way of domestic violence. Not sure what to do with these students. As a survivor of domestic violence herself, she understand how incredibly challenging it is to study, and deal with that trauma. Today, she got a call from her son's councilor saying he is depressed, and is not interested in anything. They had a plan in place that son could take breaks. She has escaped domestic violence, but her son hasn't. His father is an alcoholic, would take son to bar, and he even attempted suicide in front of son. So the son is struggling with trauma, looking after his father in this condition. It took to years to get him to a psychiatrist because of backlog. But he has to court for absenteeism now. Six white men sit on school board, three or four of them don't have kids – they don't represent her. Has been accepted into Umass Dartmouth but can't go but afraid to rack up student debt if she cant even afford a car. "share something amendment" – if does pass it would help.

Jean Fox, Bristol county sheriff's department have a good bullying program. They'll go into school, and do age-appropriate presentations. Call your rep, Silvia, he loves children and would be a good advocate for you. Parents know best, the school system shuts them out. I'll move to fall river and vote for you on the school board!

Becca, all state-run services have a liaison. Call the reps office.

Barnstable

Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women Regional Public Hearing in Barnstable

March 27th, 2018, 4:30-6:30pm

Cape Cod Community College, West Barnstable

Representative Dylan Fernandez

Helped Elizabeth warren get into office. Tires to work to support women's issues. Thinks legislature has done well on women's issues this year, passing Paid family medical leave, ACCESS bill and blank. Proud to have voted for all of those. Access to abortions is something he is working towards with Planned Parenthood, thinking of a tele medical bill that would help with that. He's working with Senator Sears on that too and is "here to listen and bring your voices to the state house and advocate for you."

Cherie Crowell

Was drugged, raped, and has lost her children, of whom her ex has custody. Had no recourse. Her proposed solutions, “respect me, all women and my right to safety.” All should respect the laws, which should be simple. There should be no more abuse, rape, and no more sexual harassment. She wants everyone to listen to our needs, do not hush us: Respect our loss, our needs, our trauma and know that each trauma is different. She went to the state house to look for office of Domestic Violence. There was none, but there should be one. This office should offer continuing education, kindness, and compassion. We can do it elsewhere, why not here in MA? Research other states’ programs to look into financing to offer transportation, medical, dental, food, the basics. She is grateful for a bed today, it’s not that safe, but she’s grateful. She wants public accountability for offenders and mandatory counseling for these men. She also wants laws that are simple, straightforward, and written by women, not written by men, enforced by men: “let’s level the playing field.” Lawmakers already working on equal pay, should also work on new laws. She was molested by her brother. Drugged and raped at 17. Business president also raped her, but they don’t get stopped. She was sexually harassed for saying no. She has been harassed in police stations, because her ex had friends who worked there. She has been fighting across state lines between Illinois and Massachusetts for custody battle and had to file for bankruptcy, \$450,000 in debt. She can’t call children as the father owns the family phone line. She works with special needs kids, earns terrible wages, “I didn’t cheat on my husband, took care of my step children, and to this day I haven’t been able to get my children back. I want to get the my children counselling, healing.”

Leslie Sandberg, Julian Cyr’s senior aide

Cyr is grateful for MCSW’s hearing today. He cares deeply about the opioid epidemic and housing affordability. He has focused on legislation for women across the commonwealth – including the pregnant workers fairness bill. Cyr voted for this, which protects pregnant women in the workforce. Employers are now prohibited from discriminating against employees who are pregnant or were pregnant and need to express breast milk, providing stole, providing bottled water, etc. He supports another act, negating archaic status against women. Cyr supported this bill, removed the requirement that abortion performed after 13 weeks and be performed in a hospital. The act also repeals criminal offense for procuring a miscarriage, or providing drug/instrument that could be used for abortion and removes necessity for a woman to be married to get an abortion. Also, pay equity will come in to effect on July 2018.

Ana Saravia, with translator (Spanish)

Insert testimony from files

Single mother, domestic violence survivor. Moved from Nantucket to Hyannis. Two autistic children. One of her children was sexually abused. She’s looking for agencies that can help her. “I would like to meet families like mine. My object is to learn and support. Someone that can help us to parent children with autism, and be a learning resource.”

Priscilla Forman

Majority of homeless are between 50-82, not including those that are couch surfing or living in cars to survive on seasonal work on Martha’s Vineyard. What can be done to help housing crisis and what can be done to help my soon to be couch surfing parent?

Mary-dith, women are too busy minding everyone else that when they get to 65 years, who looks after them. The waiting list here is longer than regular communities. Maybe we need to do a housing summit with cape and islands community and legislators.

Penelope Duby, everyone knows an old woman who is about to lose their house.

Sara Schnorr, housing attorney. In last ten years, her office has been involved in one project in the Cape. Asked herself why? Developers want them to be projects, 90-125 units as economies of scale make them money.

Tara Wallace, board of housing assistance

Lack of available housing. Another problem is credit, or rents not matching income.

Rep. Fernandez, there is a homeless housing coordinator from the county, or housing assistance program.

Troy Clarkson, Senator DeMacedo

His sister is disabled with housing assistance, but can't find housing in her own community.

Jean Fox, check out preservation fund

Bobbi Richards, Director of Falmouth Housing Authority

Richards is from San Diego, grew up on food stamps when her mother couldn't hold a lease. They moved around a lot, raised by a single mother, and often wore second hand clothes. She stayed connected with her church, went Wednesday, Sunday all day, and attended youth activities. By 5th grade, they got some stability by getting housing. She went from being shy to outgoing, answering questions, and was the first to graduate high school, get a BA and an MA. None of that would have happened unless someone gave her mother a house. This is why she is working in housing. Housing authorities are really constrained but really good at talking about housing needs. A few tips – need a voucher program that is specific to women and children in emergency situations. Towns need to consider owners to consider participating. Owners have no incentive to rent as they can earn money year-round by doing summer rental; there is no financial incentive. They just finished filming a PSA targeting second home owners – “why won't you rent to people who serve you in your community” – in McDonalds, Christmas tree shop. They don't want to rent to families, as they don't want damage and have to go through lengthy eviction process – which are 3 to 4 months. There are security deposit bates, where owners could collect damage. If they had some money, we may be able to appeal to their emotions to do year round rental. There are currently 1100 on waitlist, but there are only 770 units. Average turnaround time for units is 10 years. We can't keep focusing on the idea that there's no housing - there is housing, we just need to focus on how to get it.

Unknown speaker, Paula, Yarmouth?? must make housing problems a part of the town's agendas. Dental hygienists leave as they can't afford to live. She can barely afford to live there – if her roommate leaves, she can't afford to stay.

Becca Glenn, people who work in elder social services cannot afford to live on the Cape.

Colleague of Bobbi, also helps coordinate regional network and councilor??

Olisa Gillespie, Executive Director of Cape Cod Housing assistance corporation

We need people at town meeting advocating for affordable housing. "Not those people in my yard" is why projects gets stopped. Rules of order prevent people speaking up. They are doing a project to teach legislators and planning boards and volunteers, what does it mean to roster a development projects, what questions should you be asking. Helping people get to town meeting boards, speak up at meetings.

Penelope Duby, requests fact sheet explaining how to speak up. It is on haconcapecod.org

Olisa, came to advocate for parents like Bobbi's mom, have lived as. Runs 4 family emergency shelters on the cape. 98% are led by women. 1200 section 8 holder of voucher program. 1250 head of household is a woman. We need training that leads to good jobs. They want more than a \$12 hour job that is over night shift. We need evening and weekend childcare providers. Other main thing is addiction services, mental health services. The 30 day detox's are not enough.

Tara Wallace, board of housing assistance

Public transportation is also another major need. \$12 dollar moms can't afford car payments and insurance.

Angela Ackerman, founder of dress for success

Was here for school with a baby age 20-25, years ago, then went to Tufts, then Yale for Behavioral Economics. She doesn't want to be an anomaly. She founded Cape Cod Dress for Success. Founded Cape Cod fashion week just to fund Dress for Success. Public transportation is so key. School couldn't afford to help out with transportation so her child had to commute on public transport to go to fancy school. Bus system here is horrific. Doesn't run on Sundays because tourists aren't here yet. Falmouth service center is a model, they run their own buses. Buses also just go down route 128. It should go elsewhere on the Cape.

Jacqueline Vital

Lost custody of kids and acquired half her family's business. Told kids untruths, they turned against her. In fall 2014 she landed an accounts payable job in Waltham, but her hours were reduced and she was then laid off. Went to live with her mom on Cape Cod but her mom asked her to move out. She is struggling to find affordable housing. She is on the list for Clark trust, federal housing programs so when she turns 62. She finally worked her way to independence but she still can't find a place to live.

Cathy Gibson, housing board

Housing is a huge crisis here. Need to write to their legislator every chance they get.

B. 2017/2018 Regional Public Hearing Testimony

Westfield Hearing Testimony

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Boston Women's Workforce Council, I am writing today to reaffirm our commitment to closing the gender pay gap. In a city where women make up more than half the residents and half the workforce, pay equity is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do.

The Boston Women's Workforce Council, a public-private partnership between the City of Boston and Boston University, has partnered with over 220 Boston-area employers to close the gender wage gap in our city. Together, we have created The Boston 100% Talent Compact, a first-in-the-nation, business community-driven effort to level the playing field for working women.

By signing on to the Compact, employers agree to:

- ☐ Look at their own data and practices to assess where gender gaps exist;
- ☐ Anonymously share their wage data with the Council, which then creates a snapshot of what inequality looks like in our city; and
- ☐ Participate in an annual Best Practices Conference, where signers of the Compact learn more about cutting edge research and share interventions that have worked for their organization.

However, the work we do with employers is just one part of Boston's multi-pronged approach to closing the wage gap. The Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement, in a partnership with the American Association of University Women, also offers free salary negotiation workshops to all women living or working in Boston, with the goal of training 85,000 women in five years.

We hope to tackle the cultural barriers facing women in the workplace between our interactions with employers and female employees themselves. The third and very important piece of this multi-pronged approach is having effective legislation in place that addresses the most egregious instances of pay discrimination and ensures that employees have the tools to address these issues with their employers.

Together, we can make Boston – and all of Massachusetts – the best place in the country for working women.

Very best,

MaryRose Mazzola

Executive Director

Boston Women's Workforce Council

MCSW Public Hearing: October 24th, 2017, Westfield State University

Testimony submitted by Morgan O'Connor, High School Student, Girl Scouts

Peer Pressure

- ☐ Girls are sensitive to “messaging up”
- ☐ Common idea that men are superior to women in some fields
- ☐ Dress codes are sexist
 - o Women need to dress more like men to compete

Told “Scary”

- ☐ Girls don't want to appear scary or mean

Girls couldn't answer question of

- ☐ Why more girls don't pursue leadership roles
 - o falling into or accepting it how it is
- ☐ Need to make them aware of how that will make it harder to overcome when trying to advance in career

Lack of Parental Support

- ☐ Mothers especially should encourage
- ☐ Lead by Example

Dana Carnegie

Girl Scouts and Civic Engagement

The Girl Scout Movement is made up of individuals who hold beliefs as varied as our nation itself.

And because all girls have a home at Girl Scouts, we encourage each and every one in our Movement to form her own ideas, opinions, beliefs, and political ideology.

At our core, Girl Scouts aims to inspire girls to be leaders in their own lives by building the courage, confidence, and character to raise their voices and be advocates for the issues and ideas important to them.

Girl Scouts use their determination to lead every day in the fight for a clean environment, racial and gender equality, safety issues, local concerns, and so much more.

And leadership is why the effect of Girl Scouts remains so long after a girl leaves her troop meetings behind and moves on in the world.

To celebrate more than a century of Girl Scout civic engagement, Girl Scouts has launched the G.I.R.L. AgendaSM, a nonpartisan initiative to inspire, prepare, and mobilize girls and those who care about them to lead positive change through civic action.

The G.I.R.L. Agenda makes it simple to access civic engagement resources tailored to prepare every G.I.R.L. (Go-getter, Innovator, Risk-taker, Leader)TM to stand up for what she believes in. The resources are derived from time-tested Girl Scout programming and provide a roadmap for how to take action in different ways, such as challenging unfair policies, mobilizing communities to support important causes, and meeting with public officials and community leaders to educate them about key issues.

By making age-appropriate resources accessible to all, and by providing actionable steps through the Girl Scout Advocacy Network to influence policy issues that affect girls, the G.I.R.L. Agenda will give hundreds of thousands of girls and adults tangible ways to make a difference in topics of their choosing, expanding the reach of civic engagement resources beyond Girl Scouts' 2.6 million members. 🌱

We are rallying girls and those who care about them to do their part to encourage more girls to engage in civic action to better their communities. We encourage you to do your part to inspire, prepare, and mobilize more girls to engage in civic action to better their lives and the communities they live in. Girls' rights are human rights.

You can find online civic engagement resources tailored for girls ages 5–17, on www.girlagenda.org.

Girls have plenty of options to get started and we hope you will help them do it.



Transform the Status of Sex Workers

A policy action to transform inequality, reform homelessness and oppressive practices

Issue

Exclusionary practices have a disproportionately high impacts on people of color, Trans* individuals and sex workers.¹ These are the most vulnerable and marginalized individuals, and oppressive policies and practice have historically seen them as a public problem and a nuisance, thereby denying them access to welfare services and treatment, criminalizing survival behaviors and creating social isolation.² The high rates of physical assault, health risks, rape and profound emotional distress are inexcusably linked to social and sexual inequalities, which, when not addressed steadfast creates an unimaginable oppressive and dangerous stance.

Among the lower socioeconomic population, criminal work becomes a method of survival; this type of survival work pertain to sex work as well, especially among the homeless, as their body becomes the only currency in their possession in their struggle to survive, and they use it to gain access to money, food, shelter, drugs and even comfort.³

Among sex workers, Trans women of color experience disproportionate ongoing injustice and epidemic violence, highlighting the culture of violence and fear for Black and Transgender people. Within policy and practice, social workers, politicians and community stakeholders must recognize that Transgender people overall experience high levels of discrimination, poverty, unemployment, homelessness, negative interactions with police, incarceration, and violent victimization, leading to high measures of physical and mental health, as well as high suicide rates and substance use. □

This policy action statement identifies prostitution as involuntary sex work, and sex work as voluntary. While prostitution another is always a crime, these action steps enforce policies that de facto decriminalize sex work and ensure that sex workers, in particular Trans women of color who engage in survival sex, have access to fair, equitable, and respectful welfare services.

Action Items

Relating sex work to the larger context of social, racial and economic inequalities, action items need to occur on micro, mezzo and macro system, thus transforming welfare services, homelessness and policing practices for all.

- Clinical practice providers needs to overcome barriers of stigma towards Trans women, women of color, and those who engage in sex work, especially the poor. Services need to address factors of trauma, abuse, previous drug use, racism, depression, and institutionalization, and build connections in counseling to support growth and positive change.
- Communities should be financially and systematically supported so they can build strong and inclusive communities, through peer-led healing support and learning, while addressing community organization, removal of social challenges from the streets and integration of social outcasts into the community.
- State and local policies should be urged to create referral networks for integrated treatment programs proving trauma-informed care and community based interventions on a voluntary basis, while advocating for housing reform, and economic and employment aid.
- Policy reform on the state level needs to change policies in regard to the survival behaviors of sex worker: abolish all related offenses such as "Common Night Walking" and condoms

as evidence, transforming the status of sex workers from criminals to autonomous people choosing the best of a few bad options, passing non-discrimination and other laws and policies, as well as improving and monitoring policing practices that often criminalize and marginalize the most vulnerable among us.

- All advocacy work and policy changes must include current and ex- sex workers in the political agenda, as you cannot address this issue without including and fostering leaders from within the community you aim to help.

Evidence

- Studies have shown an increase of engagement in survival sex related to homelessness (length and number of times), previous drug use, depression, and institutionalization. Data supports efforts of early housing interventions and increased housing retention while engaging with the co-occurring substance use and mental health problems. □
- While recognizing that violence, deceit and exploitation of children is the core of sex trade in most of the world,¹⁰ rape, homicide and criminality are significantly high for women engaged in survival sex work. While legalization creates a whole host of problems, including human trafficking and exploitation, the decriminalization model of sex work creates a safer environment where sex workers can carry condoms, work together, get protection from violence, and access welfare services.¹¹
- Transwomen are particularly affected by homelessness, poverty and unemployment, factors that may lead to survival work. In a 2015 survey of Transgender adults in the United States, over 13% reported participating in sex work or trading sex for rent or shelter.¹²
- Survey data shows that among Trans sex workers, there is a high prevalence of: early childhood harassment and sexual assault leading to high dropout rates; work discrimination and unemployment due to gender identity, leading to a higher likelihood of engaging in survival work; denial to shelters for those who are homeless, with high rates of harassment, abuse and assault within shelters; police brutality and abuse within the correctional system.¹²
- Trans sex workers of color are most at risk for experiencing harassment and violence, especially at the hands of police, even if they are not sex workers they are perceived to be. They had higher incarceration rates, report more HIV+ diagnosis than white Trans sex workers, and had attempted suicide at least once.¹²

Endnotes

1. Bancroft, K. H. (2012); Edelman, E. A. (2011).
2. Bancroft, K. H. (2012); Fitzgerald, E., et. al. (2015).
3. Francis, L.A. (2017); Wheeler, D. P., & McClain, A. (2015).
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5. Patton, J., Reicherzer, S. (2010); Purser, G. L. et. al. (2017).
6. Diers, J. (2010); Western Mass Recovery Learning Community (n.d).
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10. Kristof, N.D. & WuDunn, S. (2009); Malick, H. (2015).
11. Mac, J. (2016); Gordon (2017); Sausa, L. A., et. al. (2007);
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Authors

**Call to action at the open forum state committee on the status of women and girls,
Westfield State University, Oct, 24, 2017**

In our communities, some work is hidden, work that gets you money, food, shelter, and even comfort. Yet this work can lead to violence and incarceration.

Sex work.

Sex work is criminalized and the women who engage in it face many forms of oppression.

For many of these women, sex work is survival work. It allows them to survive unemployment, poverty, homelessness, sexism, racism, and transmisogyny.

Today in our state, specifically in our neighboring communities of Springfield and Holyoke, women suspected of sex work are arrested under an archaic and unconstitutional 19th century criminal statute, "common night walking", which allows cops to arrest women who walk alone at night. If a woman is carrying more than three condoms, those can be used as evidence of her illegal activity.

This practice of criminalizing sex work has only forced people back into sex work to pay their court fines. And once convicted, it is almost impossible for low-income sex workers to obtain a job, safe housing, or any social services, meaning that all they have is the money they earn through survival work, such as sex work or drug dealing.

Welfare postulated prostitution as a product of domestic trauma, yet its historical approaches harnessed social control and criminalization of prostitution instead of providing trauma-informed care and community based interventions on a voluntary basis.

When sex work is addressed through policy reform and community practices, some amazing things can happen.

- Community health improves. Rates of sexually transmitted infections, rape and sexual assault go down significantly.
- Police gain time and money that was focused on eradicating sex work, and instead, can invest times in improving community policing practices.
- Survival sex workers are able to access social services, without stigma or risk of incarceration.

It is time to change our policies, transform inequality, and reform homelessness and oppressive practices.

Lowell Hearing Testimony



Cultivating Economic Independence

Acre Family Child Care

55 Middle Street
Suite 500, Fifth Floor
Lowell, MA 01852
978.937.5899
www.acrefamily.org

To The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women:

Acre Family Child Care is a non-profit serving Lowell with a mission of providing a pathway for women to achieve economic independence by operating high quality child care businesses in their homes. We are thankful to the Commission for holding this public hearing and taking the time to gather feedback and information on the status of women in the Commonwealth.

We have seen many of the women working with us become financially independent as evidenced by the purchase of their own homes, the ability to retire comfortably, the ability to send their own children to institutions of higher education, among other accomplishments. Yet, despite being successful small business owners and contributing members of the community, the educators we work with still face many obstacles, challenges, and biases.

The family child care field is made up almost exclusively of women. It is not surprising that a field that is regularly referred to as "women's work" is stereotyped by low wages, long hours, few benefits, and high stress. It is a field that is highly regulated that tells business owners how many hours they are allowed to work in a day, have representatives from various agencies critique your home, and demand increasing qualifications without wage increases. It is a field that operates in fear as any accusation can lead to a program being shut down immediately and indefinitely- it is a system that considers allegations involving children as guilty until proven innocent.

Yet, who are family child care providers taking care of? They take care of the children of neighbors, community members, business owners, area employees, and university students. They take care of infants; there are less than 30 slots available for infants in Lowell in center based programs. They take care of our community's most vulnerable children; they work with families associated with the Department of Children and Families, teen parents, and families experiencing homelessness. They work with parents that are in job placement programs, subsidized housing, victims of domestic abuse, and other challenging situations.

And with all the challenges facing the women in this field, it is not surprising that the work force contains a significant number of immigrants and refugees. These women face the additional pressure that comes from the uncertainty of our current political state. What happens to these women's businesses and homes if a spouse is deported? What happens to a community that has utilized and relied on these child care businesses when an Educator's protective status is revoked? How are these women going to advocate for themselves if English is their second language, they have limited funds available, and are terrified that if they speak up they could lose everything?

We are thankful that the Department of Early Education and Care has made it a priority to increase the wages of early educators; this is very important and deeply appreciated. But, the work isn't finished. The women in family child care are up before the sun rises, work hard through the day, and spend the evening preparing lessons for the next day. These are women who deserve the respect of their community, and the respect of the Commonwealth, which includes the funding necessary to pay livable wages while shaping young minds and creating a better future for everyone in Massachusetts.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Zelma Khadar and Lucas Skorczeski, Co-Executive Directors of Acre Family Child Care

I've heard many women who have shared similar experiences to mine begin speaking about their lives with a declaration of being a "survivor". I, like those women, stand before you as quote a "survivor" of domestic violence. I survived the threats to my life at the end of my marriage, when my ex-husband "snapped" and became very unwell. I wish I knew then that that would be the easy part...I don't feel like a survivor, because I have yet to survive what came next. During my early teen years my mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and became progressively unwell. Mom's MS has taken a rare track for the disease and wreaked havoc on her cognitive function and eyesight. Her state was compounded by the reality that she was not well to begin with, as she had always refused any treatment for her bipolar disorder, and my stepfather slowly stepped away from her during that time. He was unable to handle her illness, and they would divorce in a few years. I have other sisters, and they love our mother and possess many strengths, but they don't have the personalities that make the phone call or keep asking the questions when the answers do not easily arrive.

The demyelination of mom's nerves and the negligent care of her doctor collaborated in a psychotic break on my 19th birthday, when my 16 year old younger sister and I would admit her to a psychiatric hospital. We wrangled her out of the neighbors house, as she was talking about the dead baby she saw sitting on the top of their television set, and we drove her to get help. Of necessity I spent my teen years learning to navigate healthcare and insurance bureaucracy and researching treatments and the best doctors. When Mom lost her sight, my small-town working-class teenage self managed to get her into see the head of Neuroophthamology at Harvard. It was a moment of pride and a period of hope that would soon deflate. Mom never got better and would only progressively sink into a worsening state.

I mention this formative experience because I would only recognize later the resourcefulness that time grew in me at an early age. I had no idea how much I would need to rely on those skills. Mom's illness was difficult in many ways. As many women are, she was the glue that held our highly unhealthy and dysfunctional family together. The kind of support a family might provide in a future time of crisis never returned. Still the most difficult part for me was the way I kept feeling drawn back home at a time when all I had ever wanted to do was get away. I left college after a very successful freshman year and returned home that summer and resumed Mom's neglected case management. Mom gradually disappeared over those years. It was a slow unacknowledged death--not able to be seen or healthfully mourned by me and my sisters until years later. My mother is physically alive but we lost her slowly many years ago. Emotionally drained, a young woman finding herself, that was when I fell into the comfort of the wrong relationship with a man who would become my ex-husband. Part of me was viscerally aware it wasn't right from the start and I broke it off 3 weeks after becoming involved with him. Still, he just had a way of finding his way back into my life, even from the earliest days. I would spend the next 10 years in an on again off again relationship with him. During that time our most pressing relationship problem was his gambling addiction and possessive nature--as he was not physically violent toward me prior to my leaving him for good. We had a son early in our relationship and he is now 13 years old.

My ex-husband had many positive qualities and strengths. He worked hard and consistently, loved his son, dreamed big for all three of us and was and is still one of my biggest

cheerleaders. However, when he gambled away the rest of our savings and retirement while I spent 3 weeks by the bedside of my father--afflicted with terminal lung cancer--I left him for good. After a few weeks he realized this time was the final time, and that was when he became deeply disturbed. Stalking, threats to my life and waking in the middle of the night to find him staring at me while I slept, in violation of multiple restraining orders, landed him in jail on a 90 day hold—as a person in danger to another person in the community.

Initially due to safety and then due to financial challenges, over the next 2 years my son I would live in 8 different places, including domestic violence shelters. Unable to land in any one particular space long enough to secure a job, my son and I had become “other”. Having been required to flee my home and our entire community, we were homeless, broke and in need of assistance--and although its not often voiced there becomes an overwhelming understanding that we or I must be incompetent to be in such a position. ...it was deserved. My ex-husband was incarcerated on Dec. 5th 2009. That Christmas as I walked into my older sisters home on Christmas Day, irritated over burning biscuits, she told me at length how it was my fault things had become so bad because I had taught him through rounds of promises and attendance at Gamblers Anonymous meetings that I “would always be willing to take him back.” My loyalty to my family, and being willing to commit to supporting someone through their internal struggle became another exemplar of my ineptitude, how it was all my fault.

The years that have followed the end of my divorce can be described as unstable at best. Importantly, I was privileged in many ways; I had a fierce advocate in my therapist, my own education, background and navigational skills but we had swiftly ridden a wave to the “other” side. Structural problems, policy mismatch, lack of training and a myriad of other work needs address; but that noticing did not prevent me from becoming “stuck” and still being stuck in many ways...

Having previously been an urban high school teacher in Springfield MA, I know knew the experience of some of my students and what it felt like to be the “transient” and technically “homeless”. For me, there was nothing more disorienting than having to wake up in the morning and take a full minute to remember where my toothbrush was or how to get to whatever bathroom was available in that space. It’s the small moments that can build powerfully to shape experiences and I recall feeling like my son and I were void of permission to take up space on the planet, a complete lack of belonging. Just when energy and strength is need most, the exhaustion kicks in and the cortisol runs out. Who would we be as a society if taking full care of ourselves was considered an essential part of our collective development? Who would we be if holistic selfcare was a competency given status in our education systems? How would we then treat one another? What would be our expectations of our government, institutions and ourselves?

The learning journey since my divorce has revealed a far deeper understanding of how we pathologize people instead of the maladaptive behavior that results from searching for unmet needs and histories of trauma. Too often over the course of the last couple years since my divorce I would be viewed as ‘victim’, as innocent, and from the beginning I found myself uncomfortable and rejecting of that language as it connotes a sense of a lack of power with in me...a helplessness. Concurrently, that lens, that paradigm, views my ex-husband solely as perpetrator. Its not who he was viewed as before our divorce and it does not serve him, my son or anyone else for him to further usurp that identity and label. It’s the same paradigm I find troubling in too many of the current trainings and understandings of bullying and prevention. Imagine being an unwelcome house guest when you’re having the worst flu of your life. That was the exhaustion I felt after two years of chaos and desperately wanting to have reasons to smile as I dared to date again. I believed I was getting rewarded for enduring those hard years

when I met a single divorced father of 2 with full custody of his two boys. He made me laugh so hard that one time I herniated my belly-button listening to one of his stories. We moved into together too quickly, mostly of a desire to leave where my son and I were staying because it was an unhealthy living arrangement. With damaged credit and a periods of professional disruption, during one of the worst job markets in modern history, I had found it difficult to stabilize, as many women do. Although unrecognized by me at the time, I was still a live wire rife with the symptoms of PTSD and so was my son. Seeing only what I wanted to see in this man, it would be four months after we moved in together that I would discover information about him that would clearly qualify him as a sociopath. His dishonesty, and a corrupt landlord resulted in protracted housing court case where I was forced to represent myself, as I did not have the funds for a lawyer. The case stretched a year and a half, culminating in a 3 day bench trial for which I am still awaiting a verdict. The year was consumed with housing court and weekly meetings with my sons teacher, as the trauma he experienced was effecting his learning and success at school. The dominos have failed to stop falling...

There are many problems with the practices, policies, institutions and organizations designed to help and support women and children—particularly how they too often infantilize and disempower women and actively traumatize children. Domestic Violence victims are too often seen as deficient or damaged if they aren't superwomen and there exists gross lack of acknowledgement of the practical realities of displacement. There exists a prevailing archetype that if the woman is strong enough (ie competent, good-enough and deserving) she will triumph back to stability and--moreover success. It's all within her...Clearly, this archetype fails to recognize the social structural realities and pragmatic undertakings of single-mothers.

I am no victim, or survivor because my ex-husband is not a villain and he is not an "abuser". He was abusive. He was unwell. He was also abused, a victim himself and deeply traumatized. These are pieces of life experiences, not definitions of individual people. Does the allotted amount of empathy for my ex-husband change when I offer some of his story? Who does he become when I included how his father tried to murder him and his whole family when he was in just five years old? Does he become less evil? My ex-husband has many wonderful qualities and strengths. When he became an "abuser" and when I became a "victim"...throughout that ordeal we both lost pieces of our humanity. He needed a mental health intervention not to be criminalized. When he was criminalized he lost his job, his grounding and the ability to provide support for his child—further exacerbating the harm my son and I would need to endure. I needed not to be infantilized—to be allowed to stand in my own knowing, choice and power. I also needed not to be seen as deluded or inept and taught to question my own perceptions.

Once we start owning community responsibility for the systems in place that perpetuate theses small atrocities we won't be able to view "victims" and "villains" so readily. I will not become a survivor who is weak or pathological if I don't "survive" like a superwoman—unaffected—and my ex-husband and others like him will not carry "abuser" or "villain" labels with them and become permanently defined by (although accountable for) their behavior in times of high stress. If we really want to raise the status of women we must always recognize our interconnected nature. Vilifying individuals allows us to locate the problem within the individual—male or female. A man acting out is a man who was acted upon...healing, transforming does not happen disconnected and caged... and raising the status and life circumstances of women... first... begins with this acknowledgement.

In 2014 I spoke at a hearing of this Commission in Quincy. I spoke about an experience of domestic violence and of how my ex-husbands behavior and mental-health break down at the end of our marriage caused a great deal of trauma and distress and... importantly how State involvement and current policies largely caused even more on-going harm—for him, myself and our son. I spoke of the super-woman archetype that underpins our DV policies and of leaning on a wrong subsequent relationship with a man I would find out is a sociopath. I spoke...advocating for the awareness of how “abusers” or perpetrators are themselves deeply harmed people and we need reconsider our approaches to “Justice”. I was advocating for the essential understanding of human trauma—that “hurt people hurt people” whether they act out on another or on themselves. Since that time restorative justice or as I and others prefer to call it transformative justiceis fortunately growing in our schools and other of our institutions. I stand here today to continue to advocate for restorative and transformative approaches in any new criminal justice legislative efforts—however I stand here today more urgently advocating for us to expand our notions of justice in our state...

In light of the explosion of women running for office and and the growth of the #metoo movement... there appears to be a real opportunity to shine a brighter light on many of the oppressive elements of the perpetrator culture we have all been condition to tolerate. Specifically I am here today advocating for Massachusetts to join the ranks of super-progressive states like Idaho and Tennessee and to advocate for legislation that makes “rape through fraud” the criminal offense it should be. I met yesterday with Representative. Christine Barber of Somerville who will be championing this initiative in the House....so I come here today seeking the Commission’s support and share one story of why this bill matters...

After speaking in 2014 , I spent the next 5 years (from age 34 to my recent 39th birthday) alone inside a shell, isolating myself and avoiding ever risking “being that stupid naive woman” again—I was fiercely afraid to trust anyone after my experiences. I should have known better. I needed to become more vigilant—obviously I was doing something very wrong to invite these kind of relationships into my life. So, I recoiled and lived a muted, often very lonely life. I went to weekly therapy, dug deep into my own psyche and history to heal— what had to be wrong with me—I located the problem in myself. So I lived my life as a single-mom, a teacher, focused on pursuing graduate studies, trying to make ends meet and mostly going through the motions dayby-day, not daring to want more for myself. My son got that muted version, the playful Mom that danced while she cooked dinner and who laughed easily and often was in hiding.

My graduate studies will culminate this spring in a creative Masters Degree in Mindful Education and Trauma Studies from Lesley University, whereby I am building a consultancy and series of trainings to work teachers to cultivate an Embodied Compassionate Presence in the classroom, and deepened understandings of the bio-socio-cultural realities of working with highly traumatized students. As I’ve been growing this work, I was employed for 2 years as a teacher at an East Boston middle school. With a deep intellectual and experiential understanding of trauma, everyday when I went to work as a teacher of 13 year olds, I was exemplifying and honing the way of being I aspire to support growing in our nations army of educators—an Embodied Compassionate Presence. To embody compassion (for anyone unfamiliar with this field) one has to allow vulnerability and connect relationally and authentically with students who are often exemplifying very offensive behaviors. To do this one has to train themselves to extract judgement and to condition ones thinking to the strengths, the positive attributes and dare I say beautiful pieces of very hurt people. This re-conditioning, seeing the world and people through a

strengths-based lens, is an essential piece to the success of the work and being a strong practitioner in the field. For example, a conventionally trained teacher will react to a unwanted behavior punitively, contrarily a teacher who embodies compassion and understands trauma will witness a behavior and immediately think: “What is the unmet need this child is crying out for?...How can we better serve this child?” ...and not take the behavior personally. Understanding why ‘people do what they do’ and exposure to the worst aspects of the human story is the norm. For those two years I worked side-by-side the head discipline professional at the school, a man I will call JG. Our population of students included many recent immigrants and undocumented families—a very vulnerable population who have experience intense additional stress and attacks on their personhood as result of the current political rhetoric. In addition to the deep traumas of poverty and unstable families situations, too many of our students often presented with long histories of violence and sexual trauma as many young immigrants are “coyoted” into the country, sometimes without their parents. With my education and disposition, over time I became an easy “go-to” person for emotionally charged behavior and the amount of disclosures from students that I had to mandate report felt overwhelming at times. Some students nicknamed me their “therapist”. This meant I would spent many hours in highly charged emotionally draining experiences alongside JG. We developed a strong friendship and by the end of my second year he began to pursue a personal relationship with me. I had been trying to fight against the protective shell I cemented around myself for all those years so I decided to be brave but cautious.

I had know this man for 2 years and was deeply impressed by his interactions with our students and his demeanor. Yet, with my past, I had no intention of being that “stupid woman” again. I had no reason not to trust him, but I still did my research, even paying \$40 for a more indepth online search at one point. The home he owns is solely in his name. He’s never been married. His social media included no picture of any woman or partner—and everything he told me appeared true. I began dating him. Due to the nature of our work and history together he was very open with me and immediately shared with me a journal that he was aspiring to transform into a memoir about his very difficult upbringing. He claimed he choose this line of work because it felt like therapy considering his past. Yet, despite his initial outpouring and sharing of his hard past I still kept my story guarded. It took me several weeks to share even some of the pieces.

When I did, he surprised me and said he assumed there was more and he then asked me if I had ever been “taken without my permission”. I have.....the first time at 5 years old—1 out of 3 women.....right? When I responded by asking why he had made that assumption: “like... how exactly am I wearing that?” He told me that someone who had been raped themselves could tell, could ‘read’ it in another. He told me first of a story of when he was playing college basketball in Kansas and his girlfriend at the time drugged his food and raped him in order to get pregnant and “cash-in” on his potential future career earnings. He’s 6’9 and looks as if he could have been a basketball player in his youth. The story seemed believable at the time. As I’d grown comfortable with him..I just believed him to be very insightful. He was the first man with which I had ever shared anything about my past sexual violations He also told me he had watched his sister be raped when she was 5 and he was 7 years old. I now know both of these stories to be false. I now know what an active imagination this man possesses. I now know he did this with intention to create a deep emotional bond. What I hadn’t known at the time was that I had unwittingly connected to another sociopath and this was the “grooming” phase. What I didn’t know at the time was that he had been intensely studying me and my reactions with our students over those two years, as 13 year old students disclosed beatings, molestations and childhood

rapes.

I believed I was entering into a normal relationship with a co-worker. I believed, as did everyone at our school, that he was a single-father. In the beginning, over the course of the first 3-4 months I felt like I was finally moving forward beyond my deep fear of trusting the wrong person. I felt very comfortable with him and it felt great to be able to share my life with a man who shared my work and my world view. We seemed to connect beautifully and spoke of what it would be like to share a future together, and we made plans to introduce our children. He would show up at my apartment and surprise me with flowers and shower me with positive attention and admiration. I believed I was in a normal healthy adult relationship. We began sleeping together. A month or so later something changed and my intuition started making me feel uneasy. He started to have all these difficult life events and disappear and be unreachable—and then show up surprise me and shower me with more attention. A pattern emerged and I sensed something was off...so I followed my gut instinct and I told him we should take a “break” until he got a handle on things. I didn’t like the way I began to feel. He told me he thought we had something special and asked me to wait while he handled some things and we stayed in touch the month and a half of our “break.” I had developed strong feelings for him by this point—I had let him in...

What I didn’t know at the time was that his partner, his live in girlfriend and mother of his children began becoming suspicious and was closely monitoring him—he was not single—as he had told me, our colleagues and our students—who by now knew that JG and I were in a relationship. He was not who he had pretended to be—most of what he had told me had been lies, a fiction, a character he created. These included lies he had told our students like having been a Harlem Globetrotter—he was never on that team...he easily used his height as tool of deception.

A couple weeks before Christmas he began contacting me more often and we decided to resume our relationship. On a Thursday evening, a couple weeks back I decided to surprise him at his home with a gift—like he had done for me more than once. However, when I knocked on his door, a woman, the mother of his children, whom he had lived with for continuously for the past 7 years... answered. Obviously I was shocked. She had many questions trying to discern the truth; and as I let her go through the text and pictures in my phone, and heard her assert her suspicions of his infidelity, and I stood there apologizing over and over again to HER... he sat expressionless with not sign of remorse or any emotion and refused to admit, despite all evidence to the contrary, that we had been in an intimate sexual relationship for an extended period of time. I have a deep respect for women and sisterhood and would NEVER entertained any form of relationship with this man had I known the truth. However, since that initial meeting it has become obvious that his partner is aware of his habitual infidelity and has directed her hurt toward me and has threatened me and it has occurred to me I could easily have been physically harmed by her that evening as I went up to happily surprise my “boyfriend.” This man’s lies put me in physical danger.

A week after I found out the truth about this man. He called me and audaciously tried to spin a new story. Through my hurt I raised my voice A LOT in that conversation and my 16 year old son unfortunately overheard me. He silently walked up to me as I hung up the phone, looked at the tears streaming down my face and hugged me so tight I could barely breathe and said:

“Mom, you’re just a person, who wanted to share their life with another person. There’s nothing wrong with being a person”.

When my son spoke those words to me he cemented this decision. I will hold myself out

publicly and be a poster child of that naive foolish woman if that's what it takes to effect change—and I will not stop until we change this kind of allowance. I refuse to bow-down to lesser version of our collective humanity that wishes to locate this problem within me—or other women. Grotesque fraud invalidates consent. Period. JG had no regard for how this game would impact me—nor did he care. This is a horrifying abuse in a human relationship, I had sex with this man under fraudulent conditions. I feel violated. I had been a toy ...a game...for his entertainment—for his USE. This man preyed on the best parts of me (my professional strengths) in order to manipulate my mind, my emotions and my free choice. Yes, I choose to engage with this man, but had this been a business relationship and he had conducted himself this way—he would be jailed or face some consequence. Are women's bodies hearts and minds not as valuable as a dollars? Is the basic human desire for connection to be considered a weakness? We have legislative efforts and laws against work place bullying, sexual harassment, and breach of contract; should not indecent intentional (provable) emotional manipulation and sexual fraud rise to the status of culpability? Of accountability?

I am that person who doesn't erase their email and text. I have every single text message between us and can PROVE beyond a shadow of a doubt that every word I speak here today is true... yet under current law I have NO recourse—its as if it doesn't matter, its as if those six months of my life never happened. My life, my body and my free informed choice and consent are not considered valuable enough for this to rise to accountability in a civilized society? Despite the fact that laws of this nature date back as far as Roman Empire—and like previously stated exist in places like Idaho and Tennessee and vary in qualification in other states. Moreover the details of these text show more appalling invasive manipulations than I have time to share here today...YET when read in the collective NOW armed with fact they show a pattern of how a sociopath uses ones honesty, vulnerability and humanity as a weapon AGAINST them. Equally important, I have recently learned that JG has been monitored in the past for inappropriate relationships with moms of students—many of whom are undocumented and among the most vulnerable women in our State.

It is my belief, shared of course by others, that there isn't accountability in these dynamics solely based on the history of patriarchy and the conditioning we have all experienced through our “power-over” culture. Historically these dynamics have been male-to-female with an acceptance of “boys-will-be-boys.” We place an unbearable burden on women and harmed people when we try to require them to be all-knowing skeptics who “should have known...should have seen” through these frauds. We need to change the narrative. The harm these experiences causes creates deep emotional pain that instigates depression, anxiety, addiction, reclusion, and leaves one vulnerable to another abusive relationship as victims tend to lower their standards and experience a diminished sense of self-esteem and personal dignity. This is a public health and safety issue. These behaviors actively harm women... and the children in their care; the impact is incalculable. Importantly as a woman who has been forcibly raped I believe we need to consider different language this time in reconciling these types of circumstances. Perhaps something like “sexual violation through fraud” may be more appropriate as these circumstances are different from forcible violent rape; regardless of the extraordinary harm they inflict.

As I stand here tonight sharing this story. I wholly believe JG needs to be held accountable for his behavior. If he is not, he will continue to inflict this experience on other women, (likely far more vulnerable women)... he will continue to harm. Yet, I believe it is equally important to acknowledge he is the product of a system and a culture that encourages and too often admires this behavior in men—and readily dismisses its impact on the lives of those involved. Importantly as we consider why this bill failed to pass the first time...I think we need consider the phenomena of ‘gaslighting’ on the macro level. Gaslighting, to those unfamiliar is

when someone wishes to exert power over another—they do so by intentionally making that individual question their own perceptions—their sense of reality ...and of fairness, of TRUE justice. As Barbara Kingsolver recently wrote in the Guardian: “patriarchy persists because power does not willingly cede its clout”. As with any change, those who benefit from the status quo will work fiercely to prevent progress—I read Peter Koutijuans failed 2010 legislation that was cited as “too broad”....Let us all take a quick moment and reflect and considered the real reason that bill failed. It will be an uphill battle to pass this legislation...

Yet...Crucially, addressing this issue will be a major step forward in dismantling toxic masculinity and rape culture. The commodification and objectification of women that underpins the belief system that exerting “power-over” a woman and infantilizing and/or possessing her—by any means necessary—is normal and acceptable needs to be distinguished. Again, we NEED an new narrative. Let us consider the current narrative briefly....as we witness the #metoo movement reverberate, let us not forget how the patriarchy continues to define the experience of women. When did “victims” and “survivors”—women who report crimes—become “accusers”? When one reports a car theft, they don’t become an “accuser”, they are the “victim” of a crime. Let us not ignore how these issues are defined and who defines them. Let us not ignore that we exist in a culture that asserts that we have a problem of “violence against women” and not a problem of “Men committing violence against women.” Importantly, I have defined this issue in heteronormative lens—but the “power-over” dynamic of “if I can fool you and get away with it—that’s on you” is a pervasive part of other non-binary and LGBTQ relations as well ...as we are all products of the dominant culture.

During this transformative time, it is our responsibility to question our participation and conditioning in this culture that has grossly oppressed women of all races, economic statuses and backgrounds; and pay attention to this issue as it is felt MOST heavily amongst vulnerable woman who are too often dependent on relationships for survival....not most heavily by women with education and financial and social capital...and an easy ability to speak out and be heard. It’s simple... our innate human desire for human connection cannot be considered a fault. As my son Tristan declared the other night... “Mom your just a person, who wanted to share their life with another person. There is nothing wrong with being a person.” He’s 16. He is the next generation of men—we have to help them all get there. We need to be allowed to live inside our humanness, our full humanity...no woman, no person should be made to feel they are what’s wrong...because their just being a person.

New Bedford Hearing Testimony

A little background on myself, I work in childcare, and have done so in and out my entire life. I have worked in several group homes for the mentally disabled, teenage mothers, and homeless families. OH! And just to clear up some bias I may have, I am a diehard feminist who has and continues to fight for the equality of all genders, sexes, sexualities, races, ethnicities, abilities, and religions.

With that said, some issues I feel the need to address:

CHILDCARE. I know this one hits home as I work in the field but have also been in a family that was privileged to have such an amazing avo (grandmother) to offer childcare to my parents in order for them to work to provide for us. While working with teen moms and homeless families, childcare always felt like a faraway star as it is too expensive, especially for those who are low income or homeless. I had a handful of single mom clients who had multiple children but couldn't work because there was no one to watch them but they couldn't get childcare until they worked, it is a vicious cycle. I currently work with a lot of childcare vouchers and financial aid as we know it is expensive, we need more funding! Vouchers are hard to come by, they are helpful but even with the assistance, some families still cannot afford childcare. Childcare is not only helpful to families to work, but imagine these children who may not know where they are sleeping tonight, having a consistent place to hang out at after school with friends and friendly staff, that may be the only thing that puts a smile on their face. This could be the only time they have to themselves. This could be the only safe place for them. Childcare is so much more than a convenience for families to work, it's a safe space for children to thrive and grow. With a majority of the family structures in our community consisting of a woman head of household, women are most impacted by the lack of childcare financing and options.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE. Education! I will always scream for an improved education system! My senior year of college I worked on my thesis projected that dealt with how our sex ed programming was horrendous but still better than abstinence only programs that are still the only sex ed programming in some areas of the country. Through my research I found exactly what I assumed, sex ed does not teach enough or anything about safe sex and sexual violence (let alone female anatomy...women do not pee from our vaginal opening!). A big outcome of lack of proper sex education leads to, shocker, higher rates of teen pregnancies and sexual violence along with STIs/STDs to name a few negative impacts of inadequate education.

As a survivor of dating violence and sexual violence, there is so much that I did not learn in sex ed or in life. As it is common knowledge, all my perpetrators were not held responsible for their actions. I went through the process at my college with one instance of sexual assault and left feeling vandalized and not believed. I was told that I was "not drunk enough" to not be able to give my consent. This is despite not remembering what the men looked like, but my autocorrect to a friend on campus asking for help an hour after drinking was enough evidence to show that I clearly wanted sex with these two strangers.

I grew up in a very Portuguese family where "boys will be boys" and girls don't sleep around or they are asking for it... Clearly I could not relay on my family to teach boys not to sexually assault others, so I had to do something. My two younger brothers have grown up with their "Angry feminist sister" who made sure they knew about sex, safe sex, consent, intervening in unsafe situations, sexual violence, and dating violence. I have had members of my family become upset that I was prompting safe sex as sex should only be after marriage. My favorite response to them was to hand them a baggie of condoms and tips for safe sexy time!

From my own personal experience and those of so many other survivors I have had the pleasure of healing with, we demand action. We demand better education on these matters, better resources, and we demand to be heard. To be believed. We demand accountability. I should not have to look in the eyes of an abusive ex-partner while there is a smirk on their lips because they got away with how they treated another human being. This ongoing issue in our country has made some huge steps, we can talk more openly about it, but what actions are being done to prevent it? I do not want to hear how to avoid being raped. I want to hear about consent. I want to hear about punishments for rapists.

Thank you for all the hard work that you do. WE need to work together to share stories and voices to work towards the change we need. Please let me know of any assistance I can be to further our progression towards equality.

Mandy Magalhaes

Barnstable Hearing Testimony

Good Evening,

My name is Ana Saravia. I am from El Salvador and I've lived in this country for 17 years. I am a proud mother of four. My two youngest, a 12 and 9 year-old, were born here, and they both have been diagnosed with Autism. I am a single mother, I am a survivor of domestic violence, and I am the mother of a sexual assault survivor.

After living on the lovely island of Nantucket for 14 years, I decided to relocate to Hyannis due to financial restraints a year ago. Life as a single mother is tough, but life as a single mother of children with special needs is challenging. I moved to Hyannis hoping to find agencies that would allow me to connect with families like mine. Unfortunately, I have not been able to come across any agencies that focus on assisting families wherein Autism is present. I would love to meet families like mine, who have children of various ages and backgrounds in order to be a support system for one another. My objective is to learn and support. We may be different independently, but we are connected by a shared experience. It is important for us to unite our voices and experiences in order to make this arduous journey a little easier. This is what a community is about, it is about helping each other out. Sometimes it is difficult to accept that our children are special, but God gives special children to special people. It would be very beneficial for us to have more specialists in our area. People who are educated and can help us, the community better understand Autism; someone who can direct us towards parenting skills we could adopt in order to best parent our children.

Additionally, I would like there to be more help for women who have experienced domestic violence and for mothers who have the undeniably rewarding, but exhausting responsibility of raising their children on their own. We are warriors, we are resilient, but we need more assistance. We need to help each other out; we need to know that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. And that no matter how difficult our experiences have been, we have a support system that will help us navigate our obstacles with more ease. Now is the time to stand together to express our disapproval of violence against women. Now is the time to empower women. Now is the time for us to know that we, too, have rights in our political system. And I know I have focused a lot on women, but men, too, have shared my experience. For them I also stand in front of you all today.

I thank you for your time and attention to these concerns.

I will not be attending the Cape Cod meeting this afternoon, because I do not want to speak publicly, but I do want to be heard. I am one of many Cape Cod women who is raising my grandson because of his mother's drug and alcohol addiction. My grandson is now eighteen and will graduate from high school soon, but it has been a long haul and it has had a tremendous financial effect on me. I am a 71 year old retired teacher who works full time in the summer. I am very fortunate to have the job I have and love it (I work at the Barnstable beaches.) I plan on working forever - or until I can't - whichever comes first. I know I should also be working in the winter as well which I did up until a couple of years ago, but I just hate the thought of driving to work in bad weather which I used to do.

Let me say that when I was young, I thought I could do anything and money wouldn't matter. I applied for the Peace Corps, but was accepted as a VISTA Volunteer first and was stationed in Puerto Rico and The U.S. Virgin Islands. When I came home, I got a job teaching U.S. History and did that for 35+ years. I loved it and actually was recognized By the Harvard Club for Excellence in Teaching (Don't mean to sound like I'm bragging, but it was an honor.) Because of loving children and being single, I adopted my daughters - from El Salvador and Chile. When the girls were in middle school and high school, I worked cleaning rentals in the summers as well as coaching and working at the school's athletic events. Both of my girls had learning disabilities and later, as adults, mental illness. I became the guardian of my grandson when he was three, but have raised him since he was born. My daughter had been in and out of Gosnold and other rehabs. The little savings I had went to pay for her last one. She left and started another family which has certainly had a negative effect on my grandson. And as a result, it has had a negative effect on me. Thank goodness, I have a strong support system with my family and friends. I do laugh a lot and have fun. But, I have to make excuses many times for not joining them when they go out to eat or take vacations. I have to choose between much needed hearing aids and dental work. (One of my friends commented recently on people letting their teeth go and I had to tell her why.) I dread every major storm because of the worry of the trees in my yard falling on the house. I cannot help my grandson finance his education and it bothers me. I guess what I am saying is that the status of many women on the Cape is that as much as we have worked and are continuing to work, money does matter and it is difficult to get by. I love my home in Hyannis and would not want to live any place else. I just hope that I will be able to afford to live in it when I really get old. Thanks for hearing what I have to say.

Signed,

Irene Aylmer

Homelessness on Martha's Vineyard

-Priscilla W. McCormick

This year I inherited my father's modest estate in Edgartown when he passed away, and I became a reluctant landlord to an elder woman who suffers from a number of disabilities, including mental illness and a difficult one recently classified as hoarding. In my struggle to evict her from my father's attic so that I could settle his affairs, I have become acquainted firsthand with the problem of homelessness on Martha's Vineyard and the housing crisis as they affect women on the island.

According to an article published in The Martha's Vineyard Times on October 20, 2016, written by Jack Shea, at least 64 Martha's Vineyard residents in 2016, including 16 families, were homeless that year. Of the 64 homeless, 34 were women and children. One third of the island's homeless was on Social Security income or Social Security disability income, and one third suffered from mental illness, substance abuse or domestic violence. The majority of the homeless population was between the ages of 50 and 82. The scary part about these numbers is that they do not include those homeless who are couch surfing or seasonal workers who are forced to do the island shuffle, or those who live in tents or cars in order to survive. In short homelessness on Martha's

Vineyard adversely affects vulnerable women who are single mothers, elderly, disabled, and mentally ill.

While there is elderly housing on Martha's Vineyard, waiting lists are long, and there are no traditional apartment buildings on the island. The island also lacks transitional housing to help the homeless. As a result, a network of churches, staffed by volunteers, has stepped in to provide overnight shelter, daytime warming stations, and community suppers. Nevertheless the question remains: What can be done to address the housing problem for women on Martha's Vineyard? And, more importantly, what can I do to help my soon-to-be-coach-surfing tenant?

Ruth Hendrickson

East Sandwich, MA

Email: mainesnow2005@yahoo.com

In 2003 my husband and I built a 6000 square foot home

Little could I imagine that in 2018 I could find myself homeless

Through the years from 1985 to 2009, while rearing our children and working outside the home when we needed money, I worked full time as the business manager in my husband's businesses--a janitorial company, a construction company and then a restaurant—all three of which he took into bankruptcy. As he scoped his work in his businesses, he only considered the gross income while I recommended 'net + profit thinking'! He obviously would not listen.

In 2010 we moved to Cape Cod where we began again, developing a construction company and saving over time for the down payment on a home which we bought in 2016 in Sandwich

Of course I was committed to our long term relationship, so I kept hanging in there believing we could turn it all around

You can imagine my devastation, when after 33 years of marriage my husband began an affair with our neighbor and moved out 6 months later. For those months my goal was reconciliation.

When I finally went to talk with a lawyer, she told me: "You can't afford to be divorced!"

[PAUSE]

SO picture this, at 74 because of my work history when I was not paid to work for my husband, my Social Security income is \$1085/month. If our home is sold in the divorce, my share is estimated to be \$10 to \$15,000.

Because he is 68 and collects Social Security, he is not required to provide me alimony.

So what do I do? How do I live for the rest of my life when:

I get \$1085 per month

I may have savings of \$10 to \$15,000

If my husband is required by the court to pay me an amount per month, I'm not confident he will earn enough to pay me

When I went to both the Sandwich Housing Authority and Sandwich Low-income Housing, I learned

Once my name is no longer on my home, I can then apply for housing

However, the waiting list is 2 to 5 years

SO TELL ME—WILL I BE HOMELESS?

Jacqueline Vital

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- I have never spoken publically before and am very nervous but it is important for me to do so.
- My father is Portuguese and in his mind, as the only daughter, I would be 'taken care of' for all of my adult life. HE WAS WRONG!
 - I married at 21 and for 19 years was happily married.
 - When we had children, my husband asked me to stay at home and rear our children while he bought into MY family's business. This made sense to me at the time as I loved being a parent to our three children and we had a lovely home in Mendon.
- As dynamics go with couples, we began to have our challenges—however, once HE decided we should divorce, he had access to money—and therefore good lawyers, while I did not and over the three years of litigation, he successfully gained custody of our children, which was devastating to me.
 - He was also successful in keeping our home and
 - Acquiring my share of my family's business
 - while I was given a lump sum settlement.
 - He told my children untruths about me and turned them against me.
- As we began proceedings, I took my first job, which I lost due to missing work to fight for my children.
- Determined to make it on my own, suffice it to say that in spite of having few skills and limited education, I continued to work hard at each job I landed and meanwhile earned an Associate's Degree and then at BA.
- Initially, I lived with my dad, then in apartments, bought & renovated a condo and then back to an apartment.

First and last, I thank God for his support, love, and Jesus Christ to get me to this moment, and the strength for what I have had to endure in my own Country, and FAITH. I thank God I did have an awesome great Dad, and many great respectful Aunts, Grandmothers, women who helped me, friends, and true honorable gentlemen, and my two beautiful God blessed children Christina Crowell Baily, and Andrew C. Baily who I have not seen for years, have no contact with, and who because of domestic violence abuse, and many crimes committed were taken and turned my children against me, who was innocent, so there pathetic lies, dirty deeds, abuse in every way destroyed my relationship with my children, and no one stepped in to help me and my kids, the victims. A nightmare from hell..I never expected. My dog I never got to see again. He passed away, another victim of my brother's and family abuse, and my ex-husband.

I also thank the children from Aurora, IL, my middle school kids, and the children I have met, and worked with on Cape Cod from all over the world...who helped me smile again. I was a great mother, and worked hard for everything I had. Honestly wasn't that much, but all was taken from me. I know this has happened to other women for decades. I believe that time has come, there will be accountability for their actions.

I apologize for taking so long to submit. It is very difficult fighting homeless, disabled, working part time, and running from library to library on different computers, and programs to get anything done here.

My story is a woman, mother and citizen of United States who has been failed and abused by the systems and people meant to protect me, my children, my dog, and our rights and one that I grew up believed in, worked for, have paid for, and have given most of life for in many, many ways.

I hope sharing this story will make sure that it never happens to anyone in this Country or this State. I wouldn't do what was due to me to anyone...how people treated me when I spoke up for help!

There was no one there to truly help. The help I did get came from God in the people who have suffered similar abuse as me, women, kids, and even men. I have even more abuse from women as well. No wonder era can't get through. I hope one day women will work to help women, especially the good mothers I have met who have nothing. They got more than the ones who are female abusers as well. Honestly I feel bad for men who are abused, and how do they get help. My Dad was abused by my mother, and sister, and other women ...he was too nice, too kind, and too gentle.

Thank God for these wonderful people many homeless, penniless and from all walks of life and countries,, but with great big hearts, compassion, honesty, and kindness in their bank accounts. Their support is how I persevere. They show me their support in hugs, phone calls, and cookies, sweatshirts, socks.

I have been looking for help for 10 years, survived being ruffie (drugged) again and again in juice, water, iced coffee without my knowledge, beaten to death, stalked, harassed, broken into, and more raped by white men of power, control, and financial. No justice, and I am not the only one. First at 17, and then many more times.

It was recommended by Penny Dub to offer solutions first, which I believe in. I know the problems, we all do. It is time for active solutions and helping to achieve real life simple goals.

Respect: respect me, respect Women, Motherhood and my right to safety, privacy, and my children's, and pets, and my friends. In our own communities by the so called agencies, and paid personnel who are supposed to protect us, and paid to protect us in every way.

Respectful laws, and law enforcement personnel, and laws that are simple, no more abuse, no more rape, no more sexual harassment, men in all positions who do not call women hoars, and prostitutes no matter what. No one knows how extensive date rape, ruffle drugging women is, and no one warns you, but the other women who have already been so violated. Laws that they will be held accountable, jailed, fined, databases. Abusers do not stop unless they are stopped.

Laws about Date Rape, Ruffle Rape written by the victim, and enforced in courts, and police departments, and the same one throughout every state in United States. One law it is No, it is intentional RAPE. Their names should be published, and exposed so

there is no another victim.

Listen to our needs, do not judge us, hush us, tell us you know how we feel, you do not, and do not traumatize or hurt us any further. Respect our loss, our pain, our sufferings, our trauma, our privacy, our children, our safety, and our lives. Each of our situations, trauma and abuse is different in all agencies.

Office of Women and Children – women are at least 51 percent of population -

And - PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY IN ALL AFFAIRS, AGENCIES, AND THEIR FAMILIES.

I asked for the office of Domestic Violence abuse in the Statehouse a couple of years. There was none. However, each woman I spoke to had been a victim, or had a mother that was. Statistics are 1 in 3..since I have had numerous, too numerous to keep track of, the statistics are probably much higher, and the repeats I do know, keep repeating picking another vulnerable woman, child, or even men.

Open an office - run by women who respect women and mothers who respect children and motherhood.

An office to provide, share resources, coordinate services, meet our needs, offer continuing care, education, and respect, kindness, compassion, empathy, and safety and security and communication cell phones.

An office that actually helps to provide:

Housing

Medical and emotional support

Food – meals, housing, getting

Financial support and empowerment

Communications – cell phones, computers

Legal support and empowerment

Transportation support and empowerment

Education and Employment – support, opportunities, training, and securing positions

Relocation opportunities support and encouragement - help housing, resources, financial

Protection, name change, social security change,

Protect against identity theft

Helping women get on feet with safety and stability

Protect her and her children from further abuse

Make Sure the Abuser get helps and has boundaries!

Enforcement to protect victims in new lives and their children

Surrounding her and her children in communities with respect, safety, privacy and

Security to build, heal, and move on in their lives.

Support groups for all the women and kids, the goal is to help the women get stronger and work together as teams and build new families so they can turn around and help another women and her children and build one great big family of women, children, and good men in communities, and the abusers and perverts will be singled out, and dealt with.

Confidential

Counseling on how to prevent further abuse, database of ex-husbands and ex-wives who abuse, because they will pick another victim be it another woman – as wife 3, then he picked on my daughter more, other women, women they work with, nieces, shine the truth on their lives in a public way.

It is extremely too hard especially when injured, beaten to death, and drugged to run to police, move to shelter, defend your rights, recover from injury, get medical attention for you and your kids, have money in your pockets because they control the bank accounts, and try to control phones, car keys, etc. So assistance, real help in coordinating to get to safety, regroup, provide safety, and stability and be able to plan what to do next with a team that can ensure you and your children get the help you need to deal with it, make plans, move onward.

Plans get to safety:

Money - --- Financing: Program that can get us to safety, immediately, with financing to remove us, our children from them, or put them away. Not make me drive around, call around from one agency to another, then one shelter to another all over Massachusetts as I have done, only to learn no...than to be treated like garbage at police stations and agencies, and even have to deal with more abusive men and women who are supposed to help us. That is cruel. Like a criminal cause I got no place to live. Making me and other women survive more traumas with children, changing names, addresses, and phone numbers. I have changed my name and address numerous times in the course of last 9 years.

Protection in all Government Agencies – United States Postal, Registry of Motor Vehicles, IRS, Social Security. No one should be interfering in any ones lives, they should be held accountable, fired, giving out information, personal, private, confidential, and they should be penalized as well, put in jail for breaking laws.

Providing basics to survive: Need money to live,

An Office /Program that combines legal, housing, law enforcement, counseling, court advocacy and privacy, transportation, medical, dental, financial, education, food, clothing, and again safety, security, confidentiality, protection, and compassion.

Trained respectful staff that has experienced abuse and domestic violence.

Programs in agency/department that encourages continuity of care, collaboration of programs for women and children who have been in violent and dangerous settings.

Telephone Assistant Program - telephone assistant with again respectful, experienced personnel who do have compassion, real experience, and training. Emergency numbers that actually know what they are doing and can help, not tell me to call another number.

Database of the offenders - and public listing of those men or even women.

Public Accountability for the Abusers, stalker, molesters, pedfiles- people speak up, immediate intervention - mandatory counseling for the abuser, fines, jail, punishment, and consequences. Make them pay back the victims for lost limbs, disabilities, lost work time, all medical, legal, expenses, and pain and suffering. Etc. They should pay the financial damages and be held accountable. Lost wages, etc., sick time. Might be a big deterrent, when people – men get hit in their pockets!

Protect our rights in housing - we do not want to live near pedophiles and abusers. They do not stop, they are sick, WE DESERVE TO BE PROTECTED FINALLY, AND OUR HOUSING SAFE.

Personally bus drivers should know about pedfiles in neighborhoods so that they can be an extra protection for a child who might be home alone as a single mother has to work her little minimum wage jobs Because of how women are paid. At least provide our children with some added safety in our neighborhoods as the courts allow these sick men who do not get proper treatment, and are prevalent in our society combined with our society's lack of morals, encouraging men to take Viagra and testosterone stuff. Medications these men think they are something more, and putting ownership back on their doctors to help monitor their disturbing behaviors, and issues.

Cracking down on child porn, and porn, and those who have the need to go after innocent women and children. Go after them. Encourage children to truly speak up, and listen to what they say. Too many adults are so stuck in their egos, and do not have any respect for young people and children. Listen to the children.

Laws that are simple, straightforward written by women of, with honesty and righteous, to protect women, our bodies, our

daughters, our sons, not written by men, altered by men, and then defended by men, and judged by men, and enforced by men. Level the playing field for all women and children's right, protecting young people's rights, elder women's rights.

Equal pay, women can't afford to live in this country on the wage that is the majority. Most men earn double the wage, and sadly most women do most of the men's work, at home, at their jobs, and get screwed.

Affirmative Action that really works, hold them accountable in public, private, and every sector in the community.

Women's Union - to protect our rights, our bodies, our lives, our children, our housing, our incomes, and our lives.

Domestic violence abuse sadly is not limited to just women; I have seen my share of women who have abused me, and my children in many, many ways. Same rules apply).

Communities that stand up in truth, righteous, and spirit in words, and actions that says NO MORE! Neighbors who stand up and say help that woman and her kids, true friends who stand up, speak up, write and communities that protect the women and their children and pets who have already been beaten, disabled, abused, and trying to put their lives back together to protect them from another abuser.

Sad, men get it when it finally hits their family, their daughters.

My story

I grew up believing we all had rights, and respected the law and responsibility throughout my life. I was bullied, abused and harassed in my own home, molested by my older brother and abused, walking to school, at school, and sexually harassed starting in 4th grade if not before.

No help at school ... I was drugged at 17, and thank God not gang raped at Harvard drinking punch -Fruit punch on a blind date. I thought fruit punch but something so powerful put in it that in seconds I was ready to black out and threw up.

This happened several times in my 20's and then again several times in my business career, personal and even in my own home by coward men without my knowledge or consent – criminal in my opinion, to molest, rape, humiliate me, sexually abuse me, and expose me as a hoar, and violate me in every single way. Done too many other women before me, probably after me.

Threatened in two cases, one by ex if I spoke up I would be dead, with knives in my throat, in choke holds, and beat up to death by both who may be still today walking around, business as usual for my ex in Illinois – still claiming he has no drinking problem with Grey Goose combined with perk/vices 3 inhalers for over 10 years or more, probably more now,. And a gun.

I did kindly inform the police in his town that they should be careful. Mr. nice charming businessman, is not what you think he is, for their protection as well.

A divorce from hell divorce, date ruffle raped, drugged so I would be considered crazy, I did not ask for this, dress for it, and shame on the boys and men, and women that do this, help others to do this behavior and women who enable or help them as well.

My business experience – ruffed by President of Corporation and raped, humiliated beyond comprehension at 23 years old. A game I believe men play at our expense, knowing we cannot prove it. That man was over 20 years older than me the consequences of what he and the others did last and affected my life in so many ways. I have no recourse for years. I have met so many women this has happened to. A vile, vicious cowardly criminal act which hurt my life in so many ways. Sadly I was probably not his only victim, there may have been several. They are not stopped, they do it again. He still the CEO of his company.

Sexually harassed pretty much at every single job I had where men do not respect women, don't have self-control, or in my opinion, any morals or values, however, they have money, titles, power. Sexually harassed just saying no. Asked to do vulgar things by principals of companies, and corporations. Advocated with other secretaries at one company I worked with for 10 years to get the men to stop harassing us. Took them public and got nothing, not even a thank you for all the hard work let alone even a simple flower arrangement – but men all got stock options and nice bonus. Not me. They fired a senior man who made \$140,000 a year, and gave me his job, did not hire a replacement, and when I got tired and threatened to quit threw me a \$5,000 raise if I was lucky...but I had to do all of his job, and mine, and the other lazy attorney Steven Pazar at GZA - they took the credit, I did the

work. I did not go to mingle, or socialize with any in the company. I worked my butt off to exhaustion doing many men's jobs.

What kind of society and men don't take no for an answer.

A society that does not control any porn practices, calls women whores, prostitutes, when men don't get their way, and when women see competition. The pretty little liars, selfish woman who want the jobs, and titles, money, men but do not want to work for it, they take, lie, cheat, steal, manipulate and more.

After being traumatized by those events I ended up getting out of one abusive relationship marriage for 26 long brutal years, then sadly stalked by others who are so vile and disgusting, drugged me without my knowledge, God only knows, and made my life a living hell days and years, including beating me almost to death, choking me constantly, threatening, drugging me more against my knowledge, trying to kill me both men in so many ways with hands, drugs, weapons, and sick men and women. Threatening to kill me, my children, and my family.

A creep whose father had been a Barnstable police chief in a town, who had no respect for the law as well, carried 22 weapons, in his jeep had bullets and nips all over the floor, not even car registered but drove around breaking all laws and getting away with it. Stalking me, harassing me, and other men, and told me how he threatened other men with guns with his women friends. I believe he threatened his own son with guns, tried to kill him for the money his ex-wife left to her children. Abused by his ex-wife and his children.

Very sick men. I went before a Judge did not give me a restraining order. Imagine. Nut case with 22 weapons running around Cape Cod. Carries a license to carry, not a current drivers license, car insurance, or car registration, and he gets away with this behavior on Cape Cod. I know. What kind of judge does that? He hurt many other women that I witnessed including his own brother and sister in Hyannis.

I pray for the day, since this disgusting perverted justice system only helps God only knows, criminals to get away with shit, God's truth will prevail. There will be a day. Whether in this life or in death. I believe in a God that does punish those who do evil.

The only good news of that pathetic marriage was I was blessed with two beautiful children who I loved, adored, tried to protect in every way, but sadly could not protect them from my own ex, tried to protect from my own family, molesting brother, abusive other family members, and who all look the other way when I was beaten to death, and pretty much destroyed. Hard when they all gang up on you, and have the money, and resources and are desperate.

An ex and a system manipulated by men so they do not have to one be held accountable, pay child support, pay alimony, and a system comprised of men who make the laws, bend the laws, break the laws, and in some truly sad cases, laugh and mocked me. My ex-husband golfed at the most exclusive country clubs in America, and was proud of it. He met many influential people, as well as being an international salesman for Reb Steel in Chicago. He treated his superiors horribly, and the men who worked for him even worse, as I witnessed for over 26 years as well as my nieces, nephews and stepchildren and their friends.

My rights abused:

My own living house by law enforcement and my son's in Illinois

In some police stations

Fire Stations

Post Offices for years, report abuse, fraud, mail opened..nothing..mail stolen, money stolen - no cooperation and report check to both post office and police department, get harassed in my life stalked by an officer of the local police department - pretty disgusting abusive behavior and abuse of his power.

8 (Eight page letter to my daughter signed supposedly by me) telling my daughter how much I hate her.. Who is this vile?

Phone calls to my daughter, saying it is me that I am drunk, and hate her abusing my daughter, and my relationship with my daughter - by my ex jealous sister and so called friends.

My son being pulled over in Illinois and thinking the state cop was going to shot him ..for nothing, terrified.

Abuse that I don't even know that they have done to my children for 9 years. Which I pray to God is exposed in every single way.

In two courthouses – Illinois and Massachusetts

Attorney Generals

Clerks of Courts

Banking

Insurance

Registry of Motor Vehicles

Housing agencies

Legal – Attorneys - free, paid, in courthouses, pretty much in every arena except by one man who for free reviewed my case and at 82 years old, told me I was not getting any help I was being screwed. There is no legal help...period.

Identity Theft – Can't get your social security number changed but he can because you havoc! Should be simple process, same as protecting your address, same as protecting where you move to.

In bankruptcy – another sleazy attorney man, told me to find rich man, think he wanted an extra affair, but good news in his personal notes on the case called me a some disgusting, really disrespectful names. I wouldn't recommend that Mr. Richard Smetters.

Rights and life abused in

In social security -

In medical institutions

Doctors Office

Therapy office

A domestic violence agency

DTA

Churches

Employment

Career

Neighbors

Family

Post Office

Police

Fire

Libraries

So called friends

And my children abused in the same ways and more, much, much more.

United States Postal fraud, mail stolen, opened, never delivered, taken by others, read, no privacy, and when reported no investigation. As it turns out one of my neighbors from Westwood, MA works for United States Post Office as some manager, another man similar to my ex, who lived two houses away from me. He and my ex-husband had a lot in common - golf, and both abusers, alcoholics, and have no respect for women, children or neighbors. My mail has been stolen and gone thru for years which I found amazing - who does this, and then figured out how good buds postal general was with my ex, and how the old boy network game

works. The post office man lived next door away from me and ex. Selectmen lived next door in three neighborhoods. Not good men – one man chased his kid down the street to almost beat him at 10 years old, but in public he is the big family man.

IRS - an ex-husband who gets forgiven for \$420,000 in back taxes and fees, of which I wrote offer and compromise, but when he stole my 401K and I got the tax penalty for him stealing, I had to pay \$5000.....which they took, will not give me a property explanation of how he gets forgiven that much money that he owed, and then he stole. IRS HAS OWED ME FOR YEARS, AND WILL NOT DO A THING. They have no respect for women in my opinion, or truth.

JP Morgan, fidelity - let him steal my money transactions security broken, no help, assistance, or did not care,

Cell Phone Carriers - Verizon - no protection in phone lines for locating me, tracking, stalking done by ex, and others...sadly probably Federal Express and UPS.

UPS truck driver in June of 2009 in Westwood Office Park as I was turning my car around exposes himself showing me and telling me I give him a big hard on...Report to UPS - they do nothing but harass, stalk me around Cape Cod...nice company they are. They employ sexual perverts, harassers, abusers, stalkers...A truly disgusting organization in my opinion.

Companies that claim to have policies of domestic violence and abuse I have found to be a joke. They do not support, and in fact in many cases enable more abuse.

In police interactions, my son's rights were disgustingly abused, a 14 year old trying to protect me almost beaten to death in my home, and 4 cops come in, called by my daughter, and put the blame on me - a child who was beaten and injured - not one of those highly paid civil servants were even civil to my son, took him out of my house in December in handcuffs, not even the decency to put a coat on him, and in shorts. Nice men. The trash they wrote up about me in report was disgusting, and the relationship God knows my ex has to law enforcement is disgusting. Not one of them respected me, my son or my daughter. He was injured and not one even offered to get a kid medical attention. A child can't strike an adult in Illinois. But Dad can beat his kid to death and wife and almost get away with it, and blame us... I couldn't believe it, I was so traumatized myself, by so many things he had done to me, threatening me, harassing me, mentally, physically, financially, and my children.

Police reports calling me crazy, delusional to benefit their process. Medical as well. Call the woman crazy - the men pay off...be done for generations. Time's up! Hallelujah – there is a God, and he is watching and helping all women!

Police reports that get done, and redone in some departments, when you request copies, and have to be reviewed and reviewed before they are given to me.. Why?

When I finally got the courage to file for divorce, it got worse, and thank God for one woman detective could see him for what he truly was. Sad the social worker and others probably buddies continued to belittle, humiliate, and destroy me in their police reports, gossip, slander, and whatever disgusting ways they interact. They should all be fired in my opinion for their behavior and abuse and disrespect for me, and my children. A social worker who was going to be a surrogate mother – probably for big money. A social worker in my opinion who looking back had pretty questionable morales herself, should not have been working with women and children.

I filed for divorce, attorneys took my money, did not respect me or my children or my dog. It was an admonition of justice in every single way. Attorneys stealing, interfering, perverting truth and justice in every single way, no proper notices, no rights protected even when I told a Judge I could not afford an attorney, a Judge writing me up for stealing a large sum of money which I did not, had honestly accounted for in every single way,

United States Postal Service, important documents stolen, never delivered, opened by others, money stolen, in one case and eight page letter written to my daughter signed by me telling her how much I hated her, which about divested her to maybe the point of suicide. What kind of human beings do these things?

Court reports lying about trials, testimonies missing in Will County Courthouse, and my own children I believe testifying against me with lies, abused by their father, afraid of their father who they know almost killed me, saw me beaten at the ages of 3 and 5, and knife to my throat after I filed for divorce in May of 2009 stating "Are you gonna do or am I" telling me if I told he was going to kill me.

Attorneys who would not give me a copy of my father's will...to this date...March 7, 2009....I haven't gotten a copy of my father's last words and wishes to me, and my children.....imagine...but poor man abused by his wife, family and disrespected my whole life. My ex-brothers the trustees and exors of the will and estate. One a molesting abuser, and the other a disrespect abuser.

A family who fought over not wanting to take care of the man, who gave them everything, dumps him in nursing home and then fight and argue and hide so they could get the financial gain. Sad he had four children, and only one respected him. That was me, and my children.

A family who set me up, dragged me to court, called cops lying about me saying I was threatening and suicidal. I was fighting for my life, and my children. So they could get away with not showing the will, seeing what my father intentions were, destroying my reputations, and friendships; interfering throughout my entire life and my childrens and innocent other people who told me they cannot take my family. Another woman warning me that my family was toxic and to stay away from them.

Fighting two courts - Illinois and Massachusetts both corrupt in many ways. Fighting for myself in two different states at the same time.....CRIMINAL ..ABUSE...HARASSMENT

Stopped by cops in one town, harassed, arrested almost raped, and

Locked up for "disturbing the peace" Nice police...protecting themselves,

No civic duty there in many cases, so easy to point finger and call me crazy, she asked for it, deserves it...and they get paid to wear, and protect..Who is really protecting good women, and children, and our pets? Communities?

After helping another from an AA meeting, arrested for distrusting the peace, almost raped by two Stoughton cops, thrown in jail for asking the cops "are you harassing me". They had been stalking me, giving me tickets, and buddies with the creep who lived above me who terrorized me on a daily basis and others. His father was a cop in another town. The FBI was in this town investigating the department. Lucky me I got more hell. Proud I do not drink and drug, I love being sober, and have spoken at many churches, halls, institutions, rehabs, streets, beaches preaching the message of sobriety, my faith in Jesus and his call for me in my life sober life and sober judgement was his will.

Terrorized being in the back of a cop car, praying to God that they didn't rape me, thank God when they pulled me over my Bible was on the front seat. One took it and laughed and asked what it was. Praise God he was watching over me that night. They booked me and a group of them laughed, requested I remove my earrings, and stuff, I thought they all were going to ask me to strip in front of them, that's how pathetic their behavior was, I didn't argue, speak except to tell them I had myasthenia gravis, and sjogren's syndrome - they laughed, and ignored my disabilities and locked me up...left me in a cell with a phone that didn't even work. They got a big kick out of hurting and humiliating me. A woman matron telling me not to cry - really I couldn't even cry silently with tears dripping down my eyes, praying to God why --I did nothing wrong.

Finally at 2:00 picked up by two disabled veterans who had to pay \$40 bail, which police lied said it was never paid. These two men drove home, the cops took my phone, impounded car, had to be in court first thing. Walked in snowstorm traumatized, then locked up in the basement of Stoughton courthouse all day, in shackles.. Yea I was really dangerous - and requested attorney over and over and over...None was provided. Sentenced to a hospital where firemen now drove me for 4 days in Brockton - laughed and humiliated by those nice firemen too. I thought I had seen how cruel men were in the companies I worked for but seeing in police and fire was just despicable. The Stoughton cops gave the Norwood police my wallet to return. I still cannot fathom how absolutely cruel men are, and women.

Locked up in hospital bed, no shower, be given God only knows what pills, watchers they called themselves swearing at me for 4 days, no phone calls allowed.

Happened twice, cars impounded to the tune of hundreds of dollars I could not afford. Money changing a lot of hands to hurt me. There is alot of stuff I do not know.

Stalked terrorized, my car terrified nails in tires, brakes, and more that other women can relate to, bullied, in every sense of the word by others who practice these despicable behaviors and abuse. Amazing what our, my hard earned tax dollars pay for. I didn't get any help. Lots of abuse.

Only to return home to my apartment and the wires cut, my place ransacked, expensive TV stolen, no heat, hot water, traumatized after 10 days of hell between cops, courthouse, medical centers, and doctors, and guess what...Who do you call? I couldn't call the police...

I had only to keep moving to protect myself, fight for my son's custody, a fair divorce, and my father's will...

For years only to lose everything and have several courthouses probably lie, hide the corruption and protect my ex-brothers, ex, their attorneys...

I ended up with 450,000 of debt ...homeless, penniless, with nothing of my whole life. No pictures, no heirlooms, no memories. All gone, destroyed in every single way, and lost my children. I was written up as the abuser with metal plates in my ankle, medical and police reports detailing my exhusbands abuse for years ignored and all documents sent to the Will County Courthouse sealed and not opened by the Judge in my case for years. That is what is called justice in America.

My children and I were the 3 musketeers, courts, and police included with many helped to destroy trust, and take my children away from me...I haven't seen my daughter in now 9 years, and my son in four. Custody with Mike Baily is a man who loves grey goose, mixed it with perc's vics, 3 inhalers, has no drinking problem, three marriages, probably fired from many jobs that he lied to me about, beats his wife, his kids, and a dog who ended up with alcoholic poisoning. Judge Bram in Illinois should be proud of his judgment in this case. Injustice....

Broken into pretty much a regular basis in every place I have lived, and in 2009 drugged in my own refrigerator which I didn't even know for years....poisoned as well by two men who wanted to deceive me, to date, raped me, and wanted to kill me to shut me up.

Drugged me during the divorce proceedings and circumstances and situations beyond my comprehension and everything against what I am, who I am, had me involved with, and threatening me on a regular basis if I told he would kill me, my children, and my family. He ended up beating me almost to death. I did however after that beating do the following:

not call the cops cause I couldn't take one abusive male pathetically hurting me again.

go to two counselors - who had no respect for me, did not even have me seek medical attention.

CHANGE COUNSELORS!

I was beaten in the head for a long time, two black eyes, almost lost vision in my left eye, I didn't go to the hospital either, My experience there too...disrespect, abuse, take a pills, broken confidentiality, family into my medical records all trying to say I am crazy to protect their lies, crimes, and reputations, and greed.

In summary, found born as a US citizen, with rights on my passport which I pointed out to Judge in Illinois, ignored, abused, and then rights abused in medical, housing, mechanics, courthouses, businesses, employment, financial, insurance, every arena and my rights to privacy, and most important my right as a woman, and a mother. No one respected that right whatsoever, in fact, abused me in every possible way, and I believe my children.

A database of offenders, and accountability. These men do not get the right to stalk, harass, threaten or coerce anyone. Enough is enough.

A community spirit that stands up and says NO MORE! Sad, men get it when it finally hits their family, their daughters..

It is my right to drive, walk, work, and walk a beach without being stalked by some lonely creep. Tough laws, straightforward, and enforcement, and if it takes it more enforcement.

Nikki Haley first Governor in United States said NO MORE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN HER State... I say no more in Massachusetts - you will be held accountable and there will be swift action and consequences.

I pray that you will read this, and help to make big changes for me, my children, for other women, their children, their pets, their families, communities, and for good men that are also abused by abusive bully women. Enough is enough.

I pray also that no one has to go through what I have gone through, whether they are black, white, rich poor,no one deserves

to be treated like this ...America.

My son told me I was lucky I was in America as a women awhile back. No ..I am lucky better than some women of other countries...but America and Americans should be absolutely disgraced and ashamed at how they behave, get paid supposedly, and abuse me and my children, and many, many others.

My the grace of God be with you, and May my love for Jesus Christ, and truth and justice and change help you in your mission and my prayers for these commissions to help us all!

God bless!

Cherie Crowell

**Massachusetts Commission
on the Status of Women**



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