

Voices of Maryland Women Listening Tour
Worcester County/Lower Eastern Shore
Board of Education Building
Newark, Maryland
October 17, 2017 ♦ 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

The Voices of Maryland Women Listening Tour traveled to the southern end of Maryland's Eastern Shore on a warm autumn evening. There, twenty women gathered to discuss the concerns of women in this three-county region. The public forum was organized as a partnership between the Commissions for Women of Worcester County and the state of Maryland. Women from Worcester, Somerset and Wicomico counties were invited to participate. This region features busy seasonal resorts, small towns, and large rural areas where the economy is based on agricultural and seafood industries.

The attendees at the forum included individuals, representatives of women's and community advocacy organizations, service providers and public officials including Maryland Delegate Mary Beth Carozza. They identified a wide range of issues and challenges for the women of this region, selected five they thought were most important, and discussed possible remedies.

The evening began with welcoming remarks by Eloise Henry-Gordy, Chair of the Worcester County Commission for Women, and developed into an open forum on the challenges facing women living, working and raising families on Maryland's lower Eastern Shore.

The participants listed a total of 19 challenges facing the women of these this region. Each participant was given five "votes" to place beside the issues she considered most important. From that process, five were selected as the top priorities.

The group then identified actions that could be taken by various parties – public and private - to address each of the "top five" issues:

1. Affordable, adequate housing

- a. Inventory existing housing resources and identify needs specifically for location, quality, price, etc.
- b. Seek assistance/partnership with the Department of Housing and Community Development for planning and assistance with funding
- c. Increase public/private partnerships
- d. Establish minimum standards for rental housing quality

2. Single elderly women with limited income

- a. Offer support groups and workshops
- b. Establish a collaboration between the Office on Aging and non-profits such as AARP
- c. Increase coordination between service providers
- d. Publish a guide for available services

3. Single mothers with limited income

- a. Provide education and job training
- b. Provide financial literacy classes
- c. Increase the availability of affordable child care

4. Opioid crisis

- a. Increase efforts in:
 - Prevention
 - Education
 - Law Enforcement
 - Treatment
- b. Train doctors regarding the dangers of over-prescribing addictive drugs

5. Insufficient preparation for women entering the workforce or college

- a. Provide programs that build girls' self-esteem, beginning in elementary school
- b. Provide job readiness training
- c. Encourage successful women to volunteer at non-profits
- d. Provide training necessary for jobs in information technology
- e. Establish mentoring programs with women business owners

The chart below lists all the issues identified during the course of the public forum and shows the number of votes each one received from those in attendance as they considered the priority level of each issue in comparison to the others.

Number of Votes	Issue
11	Affordable, adequate housing
10	Single elderly women with limited income
9	Single mothers with limited income
8	Opioid crisis
8	Insufficient preparation for women entering the workforce or college
7	Need to connect aging population to available services and information
3	Need support for women providing in-home care
3	Lack of positive role models for women and girls
2	Lack of year-round jobs with good pay and benefits
1	Need to provide women with tools to start and run their own businesses
0	Affordable, accessible child care
0	Age and sex discrimination
0	Alcohol abuse
0	Sexual assault and violence against women
0	Need for affordable health care
0	Need for better access to information technology and Internet
0	Lack of transitional services for incarcerated women returning to home and community
0	Lack of access to health and mental health services
0	Lack of effective public transportation
62	19 Total Issues

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Worcester County: Voices of Maryland Women

Photo Album





