



WOMEN'S MONTHLY

UPCOMING EVENTS



Feb 18

**Rise and Resist - Mobilizing for Our Future
Women's Democratic Club**

Round House Theatre

Panel: Kate Stewart, President of the Montgomery County Council, Cathryn Ann Paul Jackson, Public Policy Director at CASA, and President Tazeen Ahmad, who also serves on the Maryland Commission for Women.



**Feb 21 and 22
Repro Shabbat**

Events will take place across the state at synagogues and community groups.

Hadassah of Greater Baltimore is hosting an online Havdallah and briefing with Senator Jeff

Waldstreicher and Heather Booth.

Feb 22

**Postpartum Support International
Maryland Chapter Open Membership Meeting**

Odenton Library
10:30 AM



Feb 24

**MoCo EmpowHER
Lobby Day in Annapolis**

You can support student advocates by donating [here](#) or reaching out at mocoempowher@gmail.com.



Feb 25

**Maryland Women's Heritage Center
Women's Health Equity Zoom Program
6:30 PM**

Featuring MD Commission for Women Commissioner Dr. Tekisha Dwan Everette.

Register here for \$15.

Feb 27

**Girls on the Run Montgomery
County Film Festival**

6:30 p.m.

May 3

Reproductive Justice Maryland

A Bridgerton Inspired Tea to celebrate the second anniversary of RJM.

12:00 Noon



MARYLAND WOMEN



Two New Women Appointed to Maryland Senate!

Congratulations to [Senator Shaneka Henson](#) (D-30) and [Senator Dalya Attar](#) (D-41) on their appointments to the Maryland Senate. Both incoming Senators have been previously elected to represent their communities in the Maryland House of Delegates.

Senator Henson is filling the seat that was held by new Congresswoman Sarah Elfreth. Senator Attar was appointed to replace Senator Jill Carter, who stepped down from the Senate after a distinguished career to serve as a Member of the State Board of Contract Appeals.

[Click here](#) to watch **Senator Carter's** last speech on the Senate floor before her retirement.



Maryland Women in Elected Office A 2025 Status Report

The 2024 elections sent three women to Congress from Maryland after an eight-year drought with no women in our ten member federal delegation. Today, Maryland is ranked eighth in the country for the percentage of women in our state legislature, down from first in 2006. From County Commissions to the Maryland General Assembly, women consistently make up less than half of all membership, and less than a third of leadership roles.

WOMEN IN STATE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

- Maryland has two women among four elected statewide executive branch officers.
- Maryland currently has its first female Comptroller and second female and first woman of color Lieutenant Governor.
- Maryland is one of 20 states that has never had a woman as Attorney General.
- **Maryland is one of 18 states that has never had a woman as Governor.**

Source: Auggers Center for American Women and Politics



Lieutenant Governor
Aruna Miller



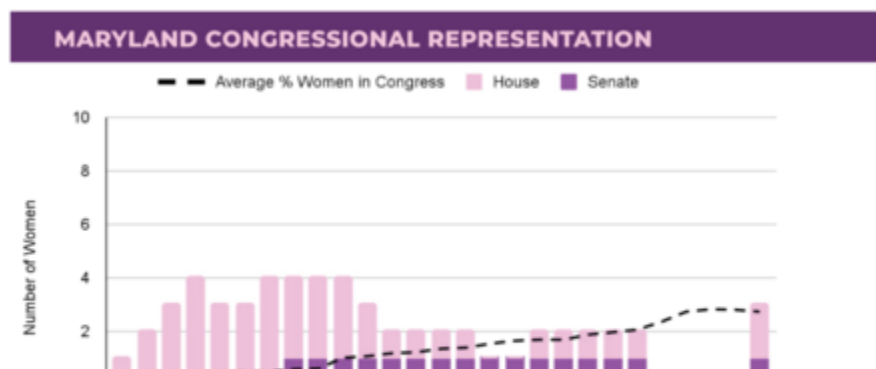
Comptroller
Brooke Lierman

Commission Publishes Maryland Women in Elected Office Report!

This fall we elected 3 women to our Congressional Delegation, ending Maryland's eight year stretch with no female representation.

But did you know:

- There are still 11 jurisdictions in Maryland with no women serving on their County Council or Commission
- There are only 3 Black Women (and 12 Black Men) in the Maryland Senate!
- There is also only 1 Republican woman in the Maryland Senate
- Maryland has never had a woman Governor or Attorney General
- Only one County with an Executive has never had a woman in that role (we are looking at YOU Montgomery!)

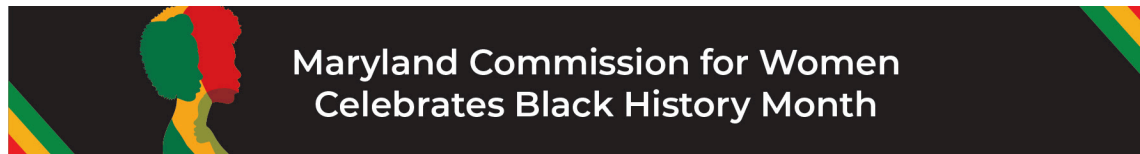




Source: Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics

You can learn all about the amazing women in elected office across Maryland by [reading the Maryland Commission for Women's report here](#).

The Maryland Commission for Women is required by statute to work to encourage women to become candidates for political office. We express our gratitude to all the women who have put themselves out there as political candidates, and all the women out there helping these candidates win election.



Each week during Black History Month the Commission for Women is profiling one of the trailblazing Black women in the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame. Do you have suggestions for Black women in [Maryland Women's Hall of Fame](#) we should highlight? Or, women not yet in the Hall of Fame we should know about?

If you have ideas, please email them to Genesis.Franco@maryland.gov.

Black History Month Profiles: Speaker Adrienne A. Jones and Activist Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray

Speaker Jones shattered barriers as the first Black and first woman Speaker to lead the Maryland House of Delegates.

Speaker Jones has championed historic education reform, racial and economic justice policies, police accountability, and reproductive rights protections.

A dedicated public servant since 1997, she continues to pave the way for future generations.

Speaker Adrienne A. Jones was inducted into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame in 2024.



A trailblazing Black queer activist, Murray played a pivotal role in shaping the discourse around gender and racial discrimination. A lawyer, poet, writer, and Episcopal priest, Murray was a key legal strategist in the civil rights movement and co-founded the National Organization for Women. Murray's work laid the foundation for legal battles against segregation and gender inequality, later making history as the first Black woman ordained as an Episcopal priest. Murray's legacy continues to inspire movements for justice and equality. The Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray was inducted into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame in 1990.





Commission Night in Annapolis

The Maryland Commission for Women had a fantastic evening of advocacy during our "Night in Annapolis." We were honored to be hosted by Chair Joseline Peña-Melnyk in the Health and Government Operations Committee Room and greeted by Women Legislators of Maryland President Delegate Dana Jones.

Women's Rights Legislation Update

The Commission for Women is supporting a number of pieces of legislation that are priorities of our organizational partners, including the [Women's Law Center](#), the [Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault](#), the [Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence](#), and the [Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women \(MLAW\)](#). We are also supporting or tracking legislation outside of this coalition work that will be of interest to women's rights advocates.

All together, the Commission is tracking 60 pieces of legislation that could significantly impact women. We will issue an **End of Session Report** to ensure interested parties stay up to date on all the women's issues.

Commission for Women Legislation on Over-The-Counter Birth Control

Senator Shelly Hettleman and House HGO Chair Joseline Peña-Melnyk have introduced legislation to require the Maryland Commission for Women to convene a collaborative of stakeholders to study and make recommendations around implementing over the counter birth control access. In 2016 Maryland became the first state in the nation to require insurance coverage for over the counter birth control. At the time, it only applied to Plan B, emergency contraception. Last year, the FDA approved OPill, the first over-the-counter birth control pill.

Hearings on this legislation are in the Senate Finance and House Health and Government Operations Committees next week. The Commission for Women is strongly supporting the legislation [Read the legislation here](#)

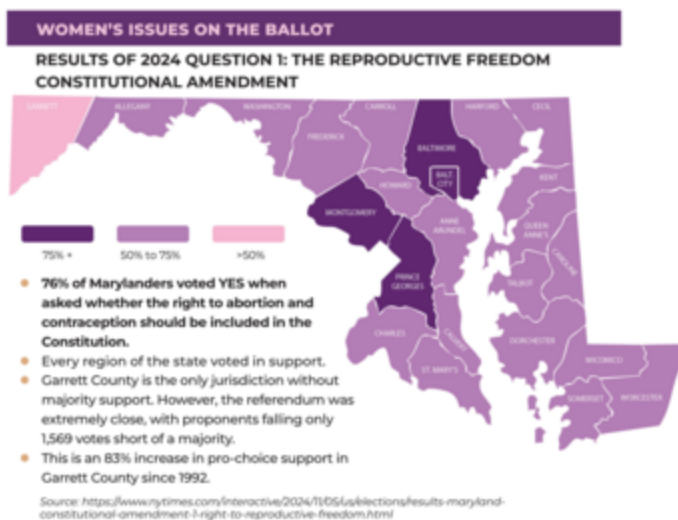
Equal Rights Amendment Update!

Last year, the Commission for Women joined a robust coalition of women's rights groups to support SJ1, calling on President Biden to affirm the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.



In his final days in office, [President Biden did just that](#), setting up what will likely be a series of legal challenges. Want to learn more? The National Council of Jewish Women organized [a Zoom call with national experts on the issue](#).

ERA advocates have long published a pocket constitution with the ERA. [Vote Equality](#) has a [great one you can get on their website](#) or Amazon!



Question 1 Abortion Rights Amendment Results

Last November, **76% of Marylanders** voted to include the right to abortion and contraception in our state Constitution.

Support wasn't just strong in the urban areas. **Every region of the state- from Western Maryland to the Eastern Shore- voted in support of protecting reproductive freedom in Maryland.**

Garrett County is the only jurisdiction that did not have majority support. Notably, even in Garrett County the referendum was extremely close, with proponents falling only 1,569 votes short of a majority. This is an 83% increase in pro-choice support in Garrett County since a similar referendum in 1992.

[Read more here in our Maryland Women in Elected Office Status Report.](#)

COMMISSION IN THE COMMUNITY



Meeting with Latin American Leaders to Discuss Reproductive Rights

On January 30, Commission for Women Executive Director Ariana Kelly and Management Associate Genesis Franco joined Delegate Nicole Williams in Washington, D.C. to meet with legislators from Mexico and Argentina to discuss reproductive rights.

This critical dialogue sponsored by the *State Innovation Exchange*, *Women's Equality Center*, and *Guttmacher Institute* helped strengthen the foundation of the

international women's rights movement.

Delegate Williams and Executive Director Kelly discussed Maryland's role as a state providing care for Maryland residents and out-of-state residents. Latin American participants were especially concerned to learn of the financial challenges faced by patients without access to affordable health care.

Pictured in photo from left to right: Senator Guadalupe Tagliaferri from Argentina, Member of the Chamber of Deputies of Mexico, Lilia Aguilar Gil, Maryland Delegate Nicole Williams (D-22), Maryland Commission for Women Executive Director Ariana Kelly, and Legislator Mónica Silva Ruiz from Mexico



Women's Legislative Briefing

On January 25, Commissioner for Women representatives from across the state joined women's rights advocates, the Lieutenant Governor, the Comptroller of Maryland, and other elected leaders at the 45th Annual Montgomery County Women's Legislative Briefing.

This extraordinary event brought advocates from across the state together to become informed and engage in collaborative thinking about today's pressing women's rights issues. Congratulations to the Montgomery County Commission for Women on a spectacular event!

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT





Anne Arundel County Commission for Women Chair is Honored

Anne Arundel County Commission for Women Chair Carolyn Carolyn Keaton Culp is being honored at this year's [Michelle Obama Awards](#) in Annapolis.

This year's theme, *"Moving Forward Together! Women Educating & Inspiring Generations,"* honors women who embody Michelle Obama's grace, strength, resilience, and dedication to leadership, mentorship, and education.

Maryland Commission for Women staff was honored recently to participate in the Anne Arundel County

Commission's 2025 planning session.



Photo: Allegany County Commission for Women (ACCW) at the South Cumberland Business & Civic Association Halloween Parade. Pictured: Renee Mason, Sandy Roeder, Tiffany Mock, Christina McKenzie, Melanie Chapman, Kimberly Foley, and Vicki Hoverman

Spotlight on the Allegany County Commission for Women

In 2024, the Allegany County Commission for Women (ACCW) continued to demonstrate its commitment to supporting and empowering the community, particularly through innovative events and partnerships. Starting the year with a presence at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebration, the ACCW engaged the community at various notable local events, enhancing its outreach and impact.

During the spring, activities such as participating in the *STEM Like a Girl* event and the Children's Business Fair not only promoted educational initiatives but also celebrated the local Choose Civility initiative and the entrepreneurial spirit among the youth. This effort was complemented by the distribution of Friendship Bracelet Kits and Chalk It Up to Civility kits, fostering both creativity and communal values.

The summer months saw the ACCW deepening its community involvement through volunteering and scholarship initiatives. In July, the ACCW continued to fund the *Empowering Women Scholarship* at Allegany College of Maryland, aimed at supporting non-traditional female students. This was part of a broader agenda that included participation in local festivals such as Cumberland Pride and Juneteenth, where ACCW volunteers actively engaged with the community, promoting diversity and inclusion. The ACCW's presence at these events underscores its dedication to fostering an inclusive community environment.

Towards the latter part of the year, the ACCW continued to make significant contributions, including voter registrations, and supporting underprivileged Girl Scouts in attending camp, enhancing their access to valuable developmental experiences.

The ACCW also showed its festive spirit by participating in the *South Cumberland Business & Civic Association Halloween Parade*, a major event that attracts families from across the region. To cap off the year, efforts in December focused on fundraising, with activities like the *Chick-fil-A Spirit Night*, which will help fund future initiatives. Additionally, under the new leadership of Communications Chair Renee Mason, the ACCW began a major revamp of its communications strategy, preparing to launch a new logo, branding guide, and its first-ever website in early 2025, setting the stage for continued growth and greater community engagement.

IN THE NEWS





Beverly Byron, former MD Congresswoman, dies at 92. A trailblazer inducted into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame, Byron championed women in the military and supported the Equal Rights Amendment.

[Read more in the Washington Post](#)



Susan F. Wood, a former FDA official who resigned in protest over delays in approving over-the-counter access to Plan B, has passed away at 70.

[Read it in NY Times](#)



Eloise Vaughn, 92, and Patsy Clarke, 95: Mothers who fought for AIDS victims. After losing their sons to AIDS, the two women challenged Sen. Jesse Helms, a staunch opponent of gay rights, becoming powerful advocates for the cause.

[Story in Washington Post](#)



How the USAID freeze could be most catastrophic for women and girls

[Read it in Yahoo News](#)



Senator Steve Hershey proposes delaying long-awaited paid family leave in tight budget year

[Read More in Maryland Matters](#)



How do we advance equality in this new era? These Leaders Show Us a Path Forward

[Read it in Forbes](#)



The *Maryland Commission for Women*, housed within the *Department of Human Services*, works across Maryland State Government to advance solutions and to expand social, political and economic opportunities for all women.

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