

**Voices of Maryland Women Listening Tour  
Howard County**

Howard County Senior Center – Ellicott City

October 8, 2016, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

On a chilly, rainy Saturday afternoon, more than thirty-six individuals participated in the Howard County session of the Voices of Maryland Women Listening Tour. The event was organized as a partnership of the Howard County Commission for Women and the Maryland Commission for Women.

The afternoon began with welcoming remarks by Joan Webb Scornaienchi, Chair of the Howard County Commission for Women and by Jacqueline Scott, Deputy Director, Howard County Department of Community Resources and Services and Executive Secretary of the Howard County Commission for Women.

The attendees at the forum included elected and appointed officials, individuals and representatives of women's and community advocacy organizations. They identified a wide range of issues and challenges for the women of Howard County, selected five they thought were most important, and discussed possible remedies.

The attendees listed a total of 18 challenges facing the women of Howard County. Each participant was given five "votes" to place beside the issues they thought were most important. From that process, because there were a tie-vote, six issues were selected as the top priorities.

It can be difficult in an open town-hall styled forum like this one, to recognize overlapping and duplicate issues as they emerge. For example, in this case, there were a number of issues relating to education. If all those were combined, that one issue would have far exceeded all the others. Even without combining the various concerns expressed regarding education, the issue of educational equity rose received the second highest number of votes, nearly tying for first place.

The group then identified actions that could be taken to address those top six issues:

- 1. The compounding effects of sexism and racism, including the portrayal of women in the media/Negative views of women & girls in leadership positions**
  - a. Demand that more women are in decision making roles in the media
  - b. Support organizations that do not objectify women and that portray women in healthy, meaningful and strong roles
  - c. Encourage employers to build mentoring across differences into any mentoring programs

- 2. Gender Bias in Education: need for training to eliminate gender bias incorporated into public education Educational inequities that discourage girls; too few girls preparing for careers in STEM and business**
  - a. Develop curriculum that addresses historic gender bias for students, faculty and parents
  - b. Actively encourage women in non-traditional fields such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
  - c. Provide training for faculty and parents to help recognize where gender bias affects curriculum and career guidance and choices
  
- 3. Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault: need for more services, including preventive services, and culturally relevant services**
  - a. Increase funding for services including preventive services
  - b. Ensure that culturally relevant services are available to meet the needs of our diverse population
  - c. Provide training for law enforcement and prosecutors to eliminate further victimization of complainants
  - d. Update and modernize the Maryland Sex Crime Code
  - e. Establish special victims units in every prosecutor's office
  
- 4. Women's occupations are undervalued and underpaid, need for comparable worth not just pay equity**
  - a. Advocate legislation that requires equal pay for work of "comparable value," not just equal pay for men and women doing the same jobs
  - b. Actively encourage women in non-traditional fields such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
  - c. Provide training for faculty and parents to help recognize where gender bias affects curriculum and career guidance and choices
  
- 5. Lack of Affordable Child Care**
  - a. Develop incentives for employers to provide child care centers and benefits
  - b. Enhance or increase subsidies for child care services
  
- 6. Inequitable treatment of incarcerated women and girls in prisons, detention centers and juvenile detention centers**
  - a. Increase programs and funding for services to incarcerated women and girls
  - b. Enact legislation and/or executive orders that mandate equitable facilities and services for women and girls
  - c. Ensure that women's specific health, hygiene and privacy needs are met
  - d. Ensure that services and policies support family relationships and support healthy family reunification
  - e. Require greater training and higher levels of specialized education for employees dealing with residents of prisons, jails and detention centers.

The chart below lists all the issues that were 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.

<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Issue</b>
21	The compounding effects of sexism and racism, including the portrayal of women in the media/Negative views of women & girls in leadership positions
20	Need for training to eliminate gender bias incorporated into public education Educational inequities that discourage girls; too few girls preparing for careers in STEM and business
15	Domestic violence and sexual assault, need for more services, including preventive services, and culturally relevant services
15	Women's occupations are undervalued and underpaid, need for comparable worth not just pay equity
13	Lack of affordable child care
12	Inequitable treatment of incarcerated women and girls in prisons, detention centers and juvenile detention centers
8	Safety of girls in schools – both physical and environmental safety
5	Financial literacy in education
5	Gender bias among service providers, law enforcement officials and policy makers
3	Aging women's economic status due to low pensions and social security benefits caused by a lifetime of unequal pay
3	Need for paid parental leave
3	Substance abuse among youth
2	Legal intimidation in the legal system during divorce
2	Education issues including school starting times, motivating every student and whole-school evaluations
2	Discrimination against breast –feeding mothers
1	Access to family planning and reproductive health services for young women
	Too few women in decision making positions
	Lack of access to information about women's rights
<b>130</b>	<b>Total Votes – 18 Issues</b>

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# Howard County: Voices of Maryland Women

## Photo Album







