

# **Commissions for Women Round Table Meeting**

**Saturday, November 17, 2018  
Notre Dame of Maryland University  
Baltimore, MD**

On a chilly, rainy day in November, 32 representatives of 11 Commissions for Women from the various jurisdictions of Maryland gathered to share information, ideas and strategies for improving the lives of women and girls in their communities.

Maryland has 23 counties and the city of Baltimore. Fourteen of these have an officially established advisory board on women's issues – a Commission for Women. Ten of those commissions sent a delegation to this meeting, organized by the Maryland state Commission for Women (MCW). Represented at the meeting were delegations Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's and Washington Counties.

The Commission for Women Roundtable Meeting was held in concert with the annual fall conference of the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW). The MCW invited each county/city Commission for Women (CFW) to send two representatives to the MLAW Conference and to stay later for the CFW Roundtable Meeting. In this way, the CFW representatives can hear from state-wide women's advocacy organizations about issues that will be considered in the Maryland General Assembly in 2019. They then have time to meet with representatives of other Commissions for Women in our state to learn from each other and to discuss strategies and issues unique to these governmentally-established advisory boards.

Three speakers addressed the Roundtable: Mary Margaret Revell Goodwin discussed the plans to establish a Museum of Maryland Women's History in Queen Anne's County – with the goal of opening in 2020. Amanda Rodriguez of the University of Maryland SAFE Center for victims of human trafficking invited the commissions to help establish a state-wide network of attorneys who will offer legal services at a reduced fee to trafficking victims. Amanda Costley discussed the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame and Women of Tomorrow Awards and urged the commissioners to consider nominating women and girls from their communities for these honors.

After these presentations, the MCW provided a briefing on its Voices of Maryland Women Listening Tour and the findings in its recently published report, outlining the "top five" issues identified by the women who participated in the public forums and the survey. The commissioners were asked to share their commissions' top three projects for this year, and charts were created to see whether and how the commissions are addressing those top five issues:

## **Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault/Violence Against Women:**

- Anne Arundel County
  - Human Trafficking Project
  - Dash for Dignity
  - Focus on Cyber Safety

- Baltimore County
  - Committee on Domestic Violence and on Human Trafficking
- Calvert County
  - Domestic Violence program
  - Clothesline project
  - Forum in April: Trafficking/Harassment/Sextortion
- Charles County
  - Public forums on Safety in Relationships
  - Clothing Closet (Rosemary's Closet) fundraiser for clothing and toiletries
  - "You Matter" positivity cards
  - Bi-annual Domestic Violence Dinner with the Sheriff
- Frederick County
  - Participates on the county Human Trafficking Task Force
  - Supports legislation that will hold hotels/motels accountable for permitting human trafficking on their premises
- Harford County
  - Human Trafficking Conversation
  - Maryland Victims Rights Speaker at CFW Meeting
- Howard County
  - Represented on the county's Human Trafficking Task Force
- Maryland Commission for Women
  - Testifies in support of legislation on this issue
  - Introducing county/city CFWs to the UMD SAFE Center
- Montgomery County
  - Leads the county Human Trafficking Task Force
  - Participates on the Sexual Assault Review Team
  - Submits testimony on legislation on this subject
- Prince George's County
  - Special focus on teen dating violence

**Paid Time Off for Extended Family and Medical Leave:**

- Maryland Commission for Women
  - Represented on the Maryland Family and Medical Leave Insurance Task Force
- Montgomery County
  - Testified in support of legislation on this issue

**Women and Addictions:**

- Anne Arundel County
  - Narcan (naloxone) Training
  - Resumé workshop at Chrysalis House
- Charles County
  - Training for Commissioners
  - Support the Hope Trailer
  - Provide speakers on this topic
  - Focus on women's mental health

- Charles County
  - Red Ribbon Campaign for Youth
- Harford County
  - Organizing a conference on opioid abuse and addictions
- Maryland Commission for Women
  - Supporting DLLR's Workforce Development grant program for women with addictions, including incarcerated women

**Women in Leadership Positions:**

- Anne Arundel County
  - Designing a three-part campaign
    - Profile "Ted Talks" on social media
    - Panel discussion at the library
    - Film screening
- Baltimore County
  - Woman of the Year Program
  - High School Senior of the Year Award
- Calvert County
  - Women of the World Recognition Luncheon
  - Women of Tomorrow Award
  - I Can project – career seminar series for girls
  - Letters to Editor re: Too Few Women in Elected Office
- Frederick County
  - She Leads Project
  - Rave About Women (RAW) Awards
- Harford County
  - Women of Tomorrow Event for Middle and High School Students
  - Athena Award for Women Business Leaders
- Howard County
  - Howard County Women's Hall of Fame
- Maryland Commission for Women
  - Maryland Women's Hall of Fame
  - Maryland Women of Tomorrow Awards for Grades 10, 11 and 12
  - Organizing a Women's Leadership Conference for 2020
- Montgomery County
  - Designated this issue as a priority for 2019
  - Emerging Leaders Conference for Teen Girls at the Women's Legislative Briefing
- Prince George's County
  - Align priorities with new County Executive (a woman!)

**Affordable, Quality Child Care:**

- Montgomery County testifies on this issue
- Prince George's County is developing an affordable child care resource guide

In addition to their work on these issues, the Commissions for Women across the state are working on many other challenging and important projects:

- Eliminating discrimination against women wearing hijabs (Baltimore County)
- Financial literacy, including senior women and Social Security (Calvert County)
- Women's Health Expo (Calvert County)
- Financial literacy programs for youth, young adults and adults (Charles County)
- Women's History Award (Charles County)
- Purses for a Purpose Project for homeless women (Charles County)
- Safe after-prom parties (Charles County)
- Comedy with a Cause – for veterans transitioning back into the community (Charles County)
- Writing to political candidates asking each “What are you going to do for women?” (Frederick County)
- Five events each month educating community on existing resources (Frederick County)
- “Hope in Handbags” project for homeless families (Harford County)
- Jobs Expo (Harford County)
- Feminine Hygiene Product Drive for women's shelters (Howard County)
- Annual Women's Legislative Briefing (Montgomery County)
- Status of Women Report – every 10 years (Montgomery County)
- Organizing a Lobby Day in Annapolis (Montgomery County)
- Financial Literacy Programs (Montgomery County)
- Services for recently released incarcerated women (Montgomery County)
- Breast Cancer Awareness Walk (Washington County)
- Women's Expo with 16 seminars (Washington County)
- Hosting meetings and forums in the community (Washington County)

Commissions for Women generally have big challenges and scarce resources. All in attendance agreed that they can share ideas, and encouraged each other to stay in touch. A successful project in one jurisdiction can serve as a model for a successful project in another. The local CFWs were strongly encouraged to support and participate in the annual Women's Legislative Briefing in Montgomery County on January 27, 2019, and to consider helping the UMD Safe Center develop its state-wide network of attorneys for victims of human trafficking. The Commissions for Women in Maryland can work together, and independently to address issues at the local level and those that can be addressed collectively at the state level.

