

# MARYLAND COMMISSION *for* WOMEN



## ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023



[www.marylandwomen.org](http://www.marylandwomen.org)





2023 Annual Report

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# The Maryland Commission for Women 2022 – 2023 Officers



Maxine Griffin Somerville  
**First Vice Chair**



Tawanda A. Bailey  
**Chair**



Beth Anne Dorman  
**Second Vice Chair**

The Maryland Commission for Women was first established in 1965 and set in state law in 1971. An office in the Department of Human Services, the Commission is a 25-member advisory board whose legislative mandate includes the following duties:

- Study the status of women in our state
- Recommend methods of overcoming discrimination
- Recognize women’s accomplishments and contributions
- Provide informed advice to the executive and legislative branches of government on the issues concerning the women of our state
- Direct attention to critical problems confronting women

Commissioners are appointed by the Governor to four-year terms, with confirmation by the Maryland State Senate, and serve without compensation.

# July 2022 – June 2023 Commissioners



Andrea G. Bottner  
Montgomery County



Tammy Bresnahan  
Anne Arundel County



Deborah L. Cartee  
Anne Arundel County



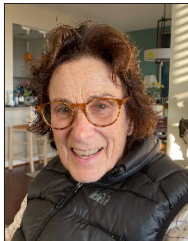
Essita R. Duncan  
Prince George's  
County



Judith Emmel  
Anne Arundel County



Kathryn M. Fiddler  
Wicomico County



Maggi G. Gaines  
Baltimore City



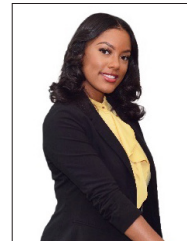
Kristi S. Halford  
Harford County



Eugenia B. Henry  
Baltimore County



D. Kaprece James  
Charles County



Lauren M. Lambert  
Prince George's  
County



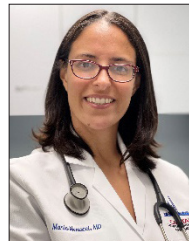
Patricia McHugh Lambert  
Carroll County



Christine S. Lee  
Howard County



Brenda J. McChriston  
Howard County



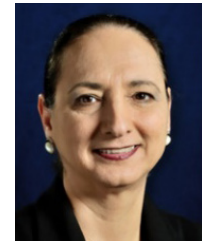
Maria B. Menucci, M.D.  
Howard County  
Retired February 2022



Roberta Pardo  
Anne Arundel County  
Retired April 2022



Jenny Peña-Dias  
Baltimore City



Carole Jaar Sepe  
Frederick County



Evelyn S. Steward  
Montgomery County



Lenita Walker  
Prince George's  
County



Monica Watkins  
Baltimore County



Tamara England Wilson  
Baltimore City



Yun Jung Yang  
Montgomery County

## STAFF:

Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director  
Tammy Wise, Management Associate

# Message from the Secretary

Maryland Department of Human Services

**Rafael López**



Women are consequential to every element of our society. Each day, women make significant contributions that propel our world forward. Yet, people who identify as women continue to face unequal treatment and disparities which affect the quality of life for women and everyone in Maryland. For example, in Maryland, women earn an average of 86 cents for each dollar earned by men. This rate exceeds the national average, but the gender pay gap in the state is exacerbated for women of color. Black women earn 70 cents for every dollar earned by men, and Hispanic women earn just 60 cents. In addition, women of color, and Black women in particular, experience unconscionable disparities in health outcomes.

The Maryland Commission for Women, a part of the Maryland Department of Human Services, works to ensure that our state supports the rights of all individuals who identify as women and girls across all jurisdictions. Over the last year, the Commission pursued bold yet necessary actions to improve women's lives and achieve a more equitable society. Commissioners successfully advocated for and informed a number of key policy decisions – from protecting reproductive rights to expanding child care – that directly impacted women's health, social, and economic outcomes.

We are grateful for the service of the 25 leaders who make up the Commission. They bring diverse skills and experiences and a deep sense of responsibility to amplify the voices of all women and girls, particularly those women who also experience marginalization by class, race, sexual orientation or gender expression, and disability. Through the Commissioners' dedication, we are confident that women across the state will continue to grow in influence.

We applaud the Commission for honoring women's contributions and accomplishments. Their work across Maryland shines a light on and encourages the exceptional achievements of women.

The Commission's work is a critical part of our agency because as women experience higher levels of economic, physical, and mental health, they can better lead Maryland - and the nation - to stronger businesses, governments, organizations, families, and communities. We will make more progress to improve equality and reduce disparities, and we will continue to celebrate women and their accomplishments.

Thank you, Maryland Commission for Women, for your partnership and for helping to envision our state as a place where no one is left behind.

# Message from the Chair

Tawanda A. Bailey



As the newly elected Chair in June of 2022, it was not only an honor and privilege to hold such an esteemed role, but a solemn duty to continue the great work of the Commission for Women. It is my pleasure to present the annual report for the Maryland Commission for Women.

After two years of meeting and conducting business in a virtual setting, the Commission for Women was finally able to start meeting in person once again in the fall of 2022 with a hybrid schedule. It has been a busy year starting with the election of our first African American Governor, Wes Moore, First Asian American female Lt. Governor, Aruna Miller, and an entire new administration to include new leadership of the Department of Human Services, Secretary Rafael López.

This has been a year of many achievements. Through our research, led by the Commission's Status of Women in Maryland (SWiM) Committee and our three recent publications, the Commission's work has been well recognized and well received throughout the State by many of our partners and has enabled new partnerships. We provided numerous briefings about the research and attended various events at the invitation of interested organizations around the state.

Our Advocacy and Collaboration Taskforce (ACT) undertook a demanding agenda and began promoting its 10 recommendations for state policy and legislation and three recommendations for the MCW's own outreach and advocacy work, including a drive to establish a local Commission for Women in every county throughout the State of Maryland. The Commission's Achievement and Recognition Committee (ARC) identified five extraordinary women to induct into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame in March of 2023, and five outstanding high school students to honor with the Maryland Young Women Leaders Award and recognized these individuals with a reception at the Governor's House. The Commission's Policy and Legislation (PAL) Committee identified 16 bills on eight important issues to support in the Maryland General Assembly, submitting testimony on concerns ranging from sexual assault to childcare, including human trafficking, the protection of reproductive freedom and more.

I extend much appreciation to all my commissioners for their hard work, commitment, and vision in advancing the lives of women and girls in this great State of Maryland and for their devotion to giving back to our community. A special thank you to my sister officers, 1st Vice Chair, Maxine Somerville and 2nd Vice Chair, Beth Anne Dorman. I salute you, along with Committee Chairs, Tamara Wilson, (ACT), Lauren Lambert (ARC) and Kristi Halford (PAL), as we continue to stand up and raise our voices for women and girls and continue our path toward equality and justice for all.

It would be remiss of me, if I did not give a very special thank you to our fearless, outgoing Chair, Yun Jung Yang, whose vision, leadership, and hard work have been a driving force of the Commission's activities over the four years that she served as Chair and her eight years as a very active and committed commissioner.

As I begin my second and final year as Chair of the Commission, we bid farewell to six amazing outgoing commissioners and welcomed six newly appointed Commissioners with brand new and bold ideas. I welcome the start of the new year. I know there will be challenges throughout the year, but with 25 extraordinary individuals with so much talent, expertise, and knowledge, it is inconceivable that we will not accomplish our goals. We are very appreciative and grateful for the support we receive from the Governor's Office and the leadership we receive from the Department of Human Services.

I am so proud of the work we have accomplished and know that we will continue to forge forward with this work on behalf of all the women and girls of this great state.

# Report of the Executive Director

Judith Vaughan-Prather



The Commission met for a final time in FY 2022 on June 12 at the beautiful Banneker-Douglass Museum of African American History and Culture to review its accomplishments of the previous year and to set its agenda for FY 2023 and to elect its officers for the coming two years:

- Tawanda A. Bailey, Chair
- Maxine Griffin Somerville, First Vice Chair
- Roberta Pardo, Second Vice Chair

(Commissioner Pardo, having served for almost five years, retired from the Commission in April 2023, and Commissioner Beth Anne Dorman was elected to the remainder of the term of office.)

The Commission set three priority committees in place:

- Policy and Legislation (PAL) – responsible for establishing the Commission’s legislative agenda for the year and submitting testimony and correspondence in support
- Achievement and Recognition Commemoration (ARC) - responsible for the 2023 Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame and Maryland Young Women Leaders Awards
- Advocacy and Collaboration Taskforce (ACT) – responsible for promoting the recommendations of the recently published report on the impact of the pandemic on Maryland women and the support for establishing Commissions for Women in every major jurisdiction in the state

The reports of each of these committees will follow, but the Commission carried out its legislative mandate in many other ways throughout the year:

- In July 2022, the Commission published the following statement:

*In response to the recent Supreme Court ruling overturning Roe v. Wade, the MCW issues the following statement:*

*The Maryland Commission for Women supports all women’s access to all forms of reproductive health care and the right for every woman to decide for herself whether, when and under what circumstances she will become a parent.*

- On August 20, Commissioners Bailey, James, McChriston, Somerville, Watkins and Wilson represented the MCW at the commemoration event for the 50th Anniversary of the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights.
- Commissioners Bresnahan and Yang, along with Executive Director Vaughan-Prather represented the MCW at a September 22 conference sponsored by the Women’s Bureau. at the Department of Labor on Capitol Hill that featured speakers on women in non-traditional careers, including apprenticeships, union participation and training.
- Commission Chair Bailey presented a briefing on the MCW’s work to the Board of Directors of the Maryland Women’s Heritage Center in September.
- The Commission was a sponsor of the October 1, 2022 Women Moving Forward Conference in the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women, providing information and resources for incarcerated women moving toward a return to the community and their families.



- The MCW Executive Director met with members of the Wicomico County CFW in Salisbury on October 11 to discuss effective structure for the work of CFWs, and possible strategies for addressing the needs of women in that county.
- Also in October, the Commission wrote to the Caucus of Maryland Women Legislators, with a copy to the Speaker of the House of Delegates, urging the introduction of legislation in the Maryland General Assembly that would address the needs of pregnant incarcerated women – wherever they are imprisoned in our state – requiring that immediately upon entering custody all pregnant women receive a medical evaluation and regular appropriate health care for as long as they remain in the custody of the state or any jurisdiction within the state.
- Chair Bailey presented a briefing on the MCW’s work at the U.S. D.O.L. Women’s Bureau’s first meeting of CFWs in the eight-state Region 2 on November 1.
- At its November meeting, the Commission participated in a 1.5-hour diversity, equity and inclusion training session led by Dr. Kara Hunt, Education and Outreach Director for the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights.
- The Commission supported the 50th anniversary celebration of the Caucus of Maryland Women Legislators by contributing a sponsorship and sending several commissioners including Chair Bailey, and Commissioners Somerville, Pardo, Yang and Lambert to the December 4 event in College Park.
- Commission Chair Bailey and Commissioner Wilson attended the Governor’s inaugural ball in Baltimore on January 18, 2023.
- On February 3, Chair Bailey, First Vice Chair Somerville and ACT Chair Wilson, accompanied by Executive Director Vaughan-Prather met with the National Security Agency Women Employees Resource Group, and presented a briefing on the MCW’s work and especially the report on Maryland women and the pandemic at the NSA offices in Annapolis Junction.
- Several MCW Commissioners attended the U.S. D.O.L. Women’s Bureau virtual meeting for Mid-Atlantic Region CFWs on February 7, including Commissioners Bailey, Duncan, Emmel, James, Steward and Walker.
- The MCW distributed an issue alert on Transportation Equity Day describing the history-making experience of Irene Morgan Kirkaldy whose courageous refusal to give up her seat on a bus on July 16, 1944 and subsequent mistreatment and, incarceration led to the Morgan v. Virginia case before the Supreme Court. The decision of June 3, 1946, outlawed segregation in interstate travel.
- At its April 20 meeting, the MCW received a very informative and compelling briefing on the work of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQ Affairs from Jeremy Browning, Administrative Director.
- The MCW contributed a sponsorship in support of the May 3 50th Anniversary Commemoration event for the Women’s Law Center of Maryland, one of the leading and most effective advocates for women in the state.
- Commissioner McChriston was selected for the Daily Record’s Top 100 Women list and Executive Director Vaughan-Prather was included in the Circle of Excellence for those selected for a third and final time. The MCW purchased a sponsorship of the May 8 event. Commissioners Bailey, Somerville, P. Lambert, Yang, and Halford attended, along with Special Assistant Salazan, MCW Management Associate Wise and Maryland Women’s Law Center Director Michelle Siri.

- At the request of an NACW Board member, MCW Executive Director Vaughan-Prather met on June 12 with the staff of the Pennsylvania Governor’s Commission on Women to discuss effective strategies for staffing CFWs.
- On May 23, the MCW wrote to the President of the Maryland State Firemen’s Association suggesting that the MSFA change its name to reflect the diversity of its membership and the emergency responders’ workforce in this state.
- On June 1, the MCW convened a meeting of the local Commissions for Women (CFWs) around the state, with Maryland’s First Lady Dawn Moore as the featured, and inspiring speaker. A more detailed report of that meeting will follow the MCW Committee reports later in this document.
- Throughout the year, Commissioners served as liaisons between the Commission for Women and other related organizations in the state, including:
  - Maryland Women’s Heritage Center – Chair Bailey
  - Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) – Commissioner Dorman
  - Women’s Legislative Briefing (WLB) Planning Committee – Commission McChriston
  - Women Moving Forward Conference Planning Committee – Commissioner McChriston
  - Maternal Mortality Review Stakeholders Group – Commissioner Peña-Dias
  - National Association of Commissions for Women – Commissioner Somerville
  - Maryland SAFE Center – Commissioner Somerville
  - Maryland Women’s History Museum – Commissioner Emmel
  - Maryland 250 Commission – Commissioner Emmel
  - Foundation for The Maryland Commission for Women – Commissioners Dorman, Henry, James, Steward, Yang and Watkins
- The Commission also distributes women’s health and issue alerts throughout the year, sending a total of 48 messages each to distribution lists totaling almost 1500 recipients:

Skin Cancer Prevention	7/20/2022
National Maternal Mental Health Hotline	8/2/2022
National Breastfeeding Awareness Month	8/29/2022
Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month	9/28/2022
Domestic Violence Awareness Month	10/5/2022
Breast Cancer Awareness Month	10/18/2022
Women and Oral Health	10/27/2022
National Diabetes Month	11/16/2022
Congress passes protection for pregnant, nursing workers.	1/24/2023
Thyroid Awareness	1/27/2023
Cervical Cancer Awareness	1/30/2023
National Caregivers Day	2/17/2023

Endometriosis Awareness	3/29/2023
Sexual Assault Awareness Month	4/13/2023
Stress Awareness - Your Wellbeing Matters	4/19/2023
National Child Abuse Prevention Month	4/26/2023
National Physical Fitness and Sports Month	5/9/2023
National Women's Health Week	5/18/2023
National Osteoporosis Month	5/22/2023
Teen Pregnancy Prevention	5/31/2023
Urinary Tract Health	6/21/2023
Cytomegalovirus Awareness	6/23/2023
Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness	6/28/2023
Elder Abuse Awareness Month	6/30/2023
Statement re: Maryland Women's Access to Reproductive Health Care	7/27/2022
Women's Equality Day	8/26/2022
National Hispanic Heritage Month	9/15/2022
The Year of Harriet Tubman	9/19/2022
Black Women's Equal Pay Day	9/21/2022
Call for Nominations – Maryland Women's Hall of Fame and Young Women Leaders Awards (Five times)	10/3 – 11/3/2022
Latina Equal Pay Day	12/8/2022
Happy Holidays!	12/22/2022
Human Trafficking Awareness Day	1/10/2023
Virtual Women's Legislative Briefing	1/20/2023
Transit Equity Day	2/6/2023
Maryland's African American Women in History	2/22/2023
Women's History Month	3/1/2023
International Women's Day	3/8/2023
Women in Construction Week	3/10/2023
Equal Pay Day	3/14/2023
Ruth Bader Ginsburg's Birthday	3/15/2023
Announcing the 2023 inductees into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame and recipients of the Maryland Young Women Leaders Awards	3/16/2023
Asian American Heritage Month	5/2/2023
Jewish American Heritage Month	5/25/2023

# Policy and Legislation (PAL) Committee



*Kristi Halford*

**Chair:** Kristi Halford  
**Vice Chair:** Essita Duncan



*Essita Duncan*

**Members:** Andi Bottner, Tammy Bresnahan, Jenny Peña-Dias, Kaprece James, Patricia McHugh Lambert, Lenita Walker

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The Maryland Commission for Women is charged by its enabling statute with the responsibility to “inform the executive and legislative branches of government on issues concerning women, including offering testimony on the issues before legislative and administrative bodies.” To carry out that mandate, the Commission prepared and submitted written testimony to the Maryland General Assembly in support of eight legislative initiatives (16 bills total) under consideration in the 2023 session. Five of those initiatives passed. The remaining four did not make it out of their respective committees this year.

**HB0004/SB0129: Love Is No Defense**

Repeals spousal protections against charges of sexual assault or abuse with a marital partner. **Passed**

**HB0808/SB0859: Reproductive Health Protection Act**

Prohibits a judge from requiring a person to give certain testimony or a statement or to produce evidence in another state for a case involving an alleged violation of the criminal law of the other state relating to legally protected health care here in Maryland. **Passed**

**HB0523/SB0759: Prevention of Forced Infant Separation Act**

Would have permitted an incarcerated woman who is either pregnant or recently gave birth to transfer to the prerelease unit for women and would have established a Healthy Start Bonding Program to promote the development of healthy relationships between incarcerated women and their children. **Failed in committee**

**HB0705/SB0798: Declaration of Rights – Right to Reproductive Liberty**

Proposed an amendment to the state’s constitution which will establish the fundamental right to reproductive freedom and will prohibit the State from, directly or indirectly, denying, burdening, or abridging the right unless justified by a compelling state interest achieved by the least restrictive means. **Passed**

**HB0297/SB0292: Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Youth**

Amends Maryland’s existing laws in three critical ways: provides a safe harbor for child victims of sex trafficking; helps connect victims to rehabilitative and supportive services; and provides a pathway to prevent criminal or delinquent charges brought against youths directly related to trafficking. **Passed**

**HB0495/SB0350: Child Care Sustainability Act**

Prohibits the state from making the following alterations to the Child Care Scholarship (CCS) Program in effect as of January 1, 2023: increasing the copayment levels; reducing the reimbursement rates; reducing the income eligibility requirements; or implementing a freeze in program enrollment. **Passed**

**HB87/SB0052: Access to Period Products**

Would have permitted recipients of Maryland’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children to use benefits to purchase diapers or menstrual hygiene products. **Failed in committee**

**HB1053/SB0203: Human Trafficking – Transportation**

Requires the Maryland Department of Transportation to develop and implement a training program for transportation-sector employees on the identification and reporting of suspected child exploitation and Human Trafficking; requires transportation-sector employers to certify that employees have completed the training program; and requires transportation-sector employers to establish procedures for reporting suspected child exploitation and human trafficking to entities. **Failed in committee**

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In addition to submitting written testimony on these bills and encouraging testimony by other county/city Commissions for Women, the Commission was a Platinum Sponsor of the November 12, 2022 conference of the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women and paid the registration fees for nine representatives from six county/city Commissions for Women. Commissioners Bailey, Duncan, Dorman, Lee, Walker, Watkins and Yang, along with the MCW staff attended.

The Commission was also a sponsor of the virtual January 29, 2023 Women’s Legislative Briefing – a statewide conference coordinated by the Montgomery County Commission for Women with an audience of almost 400. Commissioners who attended included Commission officers Bailey and Somerville, Commissioners James, McChriston, Sepe, Steward, Lee, Emmel, Walker, Dorman and L. Lambert along with the MCW staff.

MLAW held its virtual legislative briefing on February 1, 2023. MCW supported the event as a sponsor. MCW Commissioners attending included Commission Chair Bailey, Commissioners Halford, James, McChriston and Walker, along with Executive Director Vaughan-Prather.

# Achievement and Recognition Commemoration (ARC) Committee



*Lauren Lambert*

**Chair:** Lauren Lambert

**Vice Chair for the Hall of Fame:** Lenita Walker

**Vice Chair for the Young Women Leaders Awards:** Christine Lee

**Members:** Andrea Bottner, Deborah Cartee, Beth Anne Dorman, Judith Emmel, Patricia M. Lambert, Brenda McChriston, Evelyne Steward, Yun Jung Yang

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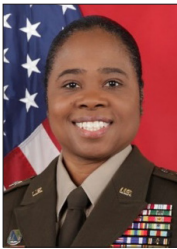
Among the duties assigned to the Maryland Commission for Women by its enabling legislation is the recognition of women's accomplishments and contributions. Each year, the Commission's Achievement and Recognition Commemoration Committee coordinates the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame and Maryland Young Women Leaders Awards Program.

On Thursday, March 16, 2023, in a beautiful ceremony at Government House, Governor Wes Moore and Lt. Governor Aruna Miller helped the Commission induct five extraordinary women into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame and presented the Maryland Young Women Leaders Award to five exceptional high school students.

The Call for Nominations for both the Hall of Fame and the Young Women Leaders Awards was first issued on October 3, 2022 with a closing date of November 4, 2022. The MCW received 25 nominations for the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame and moved three nominees from the 2022 class into this year's class for a total of 28 nominations from nine counties. The MCW received 38 nominations for the Maryland Young Women Leaders Awards from 12 counties across the state.

## The 2023 inductees into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame are:

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**Brigadier General Janeen L. Birkhead**  
Maryland National Guard



**The Honorable Charlotte M. Cooksey**  
Retired Judge, District Court of Maryland



**The Honorable Ana Sol Gutierrez**  
Retired State Legislator

**The Honorable Gloria Lawlah**  
Retired Educator, State Senator and  
Maryland Secretary of Aging

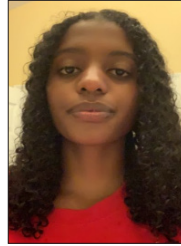


**Edith "Jackie" Ronne (1919 – 2009)**  
Polar Explorer and Geographer

## The 2023 Maryland Young Women Leaders Awardees are:



**Indu S. Bodala**, 11th Grade  
Glen Burnie High School,  
Anne Arundel County



**Mahlet Mesfin**, 12th Grade  
Crofton High School,  
Anne Arundel County



**Alondra Moreno Santana**, 12th Grade  
Easton High School,  
Talbot County

**Ilka Tona**, 12th Grade  
Middletown High School,  
Frederick County



**Amanda Wang**, 10th Grade  
River Hill High School,  
Howard County

The Commission invited leaders of women's organizations and state universities to assist in the selection of this year's honorees.



### The 2023 Hall of Fame Selection Committee Members:

- **Dr. Traki Taylor**, Provost and Vice President at Frostburg State University
- **Anna Sholl, Esq.**, Executive Director, Maryland State Bar Association
- **Dr. Kara French**, Professor of Women's Studies, Salisbury State University
- **Dr. Ida Jones**, Maryland Women's Heritage Center and Morgan State University
- **MCW Commissioner Lenita Walker**

### The 2023 Young Women Leaders Selection Committee Members:

- **Judy Carbone**, Board of Directors, AAUW MD
- **Carol Ann Smith, Esq.**, President Women's Bar Association of Maryland
- **Sarah David, Esq.**, Board of Directors, Women's Law Center of Maryland
- **Magdalena Navarro**, Commissioner, Maryland Commission on Civil Rights
- **MCW Commissioner Christine Lee**

# Advocacy and Collaboration Taskforce (ACT)



*Tamara E. Wilson*

**Chair:** Tamara E. Wilson

**Members:** Essita Duncan, Kathryn Fiddler, Kristi Halford, Kaprece James, Lauren Lambert, Carole Jaar Sepe, Evelyne Steward, Monica Watkins, Yun Jung Yang

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The Advocacy and Collaboration Taskforce was established at the MCW's June 2022 planning meeting with two main goals:

- Continue the MCW's work to increase the number of local Commissions for Women (CFWs) in the state, and
- Promote the recommendations laid out in the recently published report, *At the Heart of the Pandemic: Maryland Women and the COVID 19 Crisis*

Among the many actions taken to further those goals, were:

- The MCW wrote to the Caucus of Maryland Women Legislators transmitting the recommendations of the SWiM report on Women and the Pandemic.
- In a virtual meeting on December 6, MCW Chair Bailey, and ACT Chair Wilson, accompanied by Executive Director Vaughan-Prather, presented a briefing on the report on Maryland women and the pandemic to the Maryland General Assembly's Joint Committee on Children, Youth and Families, at its request.
- On December 9, Chair Bailey and ACT Chair Wilson, accompanied by Executive Director Vaughan-Prather presented a briefing on the MCW's work and especially the report on Maryland women and the pandemic, at a meeting of the Caucus of Maryland Women Legislators in Annapolis.
- The Commission presented a briefing to the Women Employees' Resource Group at the National Security Agency during its February 3 in-person meeting in Annapolis Junction. MCW Chair Bailey, Vice Chair Somerville, and ACT Chair Wilson participated along with Executive Director Vaughan-Prather.
- To address the recommendations the report made for the MCW itself, the Commission arranged to receive Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training from the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights at the MCW's November meeting, and a briefing from the staff of the newly established Maryland Commission on LGBTQ Affairs at the April MCW meeting.
- Collaboration with and support for CFWs in the state has included a consultation with the Wicomico County CFW in October.
- In March, 2023, The MCW wrote – again - to the governments of each of the seven counties in the state that do not have an existing Commission for Women. Six of the seven are on Maryland's eastern shore. West of the Bay, only Carroll County does not yet have a CFW.
- Both the MCW staff and the ACT chair were in touch with the Baltimore City CFW and staff as it was re-activated during this past year and new commissioners were appointed.



# CFW ESTABLISHMENT INITIATIVE

As part of our ongoing work to encourage the establishment of a local Commission for Women in every county in Maryland, we have put together this report on the status of local commissions in each county and the City of Baltimore.

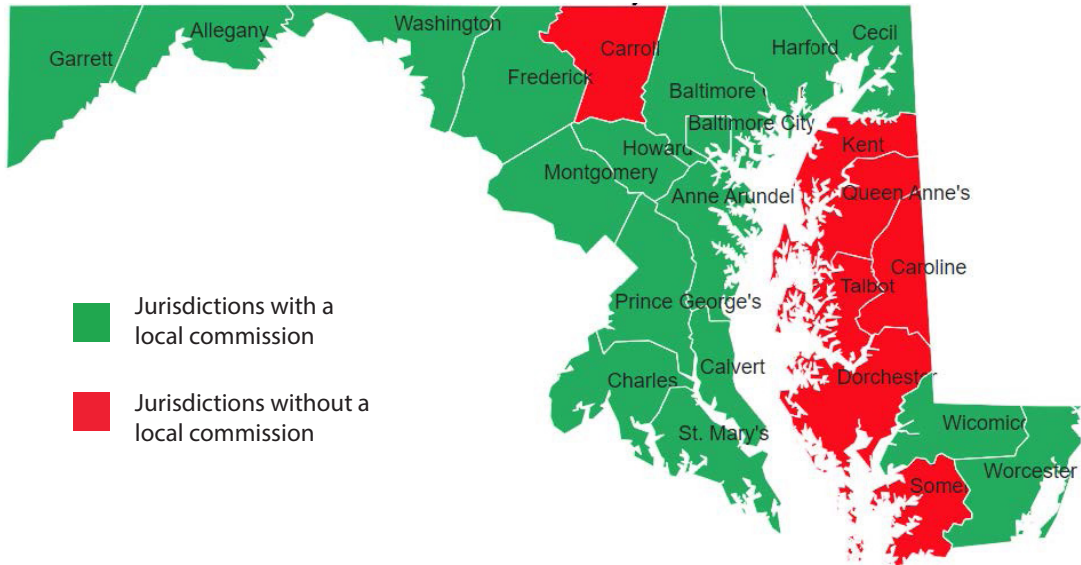


## **MARYLAND COMMISSION FOR WOMEN**

The Maryland Commission for Women was first established in 1965 and set in state law in 1971 as an office of the Department of Human Services. The commission is a 25-member advisory board with duties including:

- studying the status of women in Maryland
  - recommending methods of overcoming discrimination
  - recognizing women's accomplishments and contributions
- providing informed advice to the executive and legislative branches of government on the issues concerning the women of our state

Maryland has 23 Counties and the City of Baltimore. Of those 24 jurisdictions, 17 have a local Commission for Women and 7 do not.



As the map shows, the counties with a local Commission for Women are:

- Allegany County
- Anne Arundel County
- Baltimore City
- Baltimore County
- Calvert County
- Cecil County
- Charles County
- Frederick County
- Garrett County
- Harford County
- Howard County
- Montgomery County
- Prince George's County
- St. Mary's County
- Washington County
- Wicomico County
- Worcester County

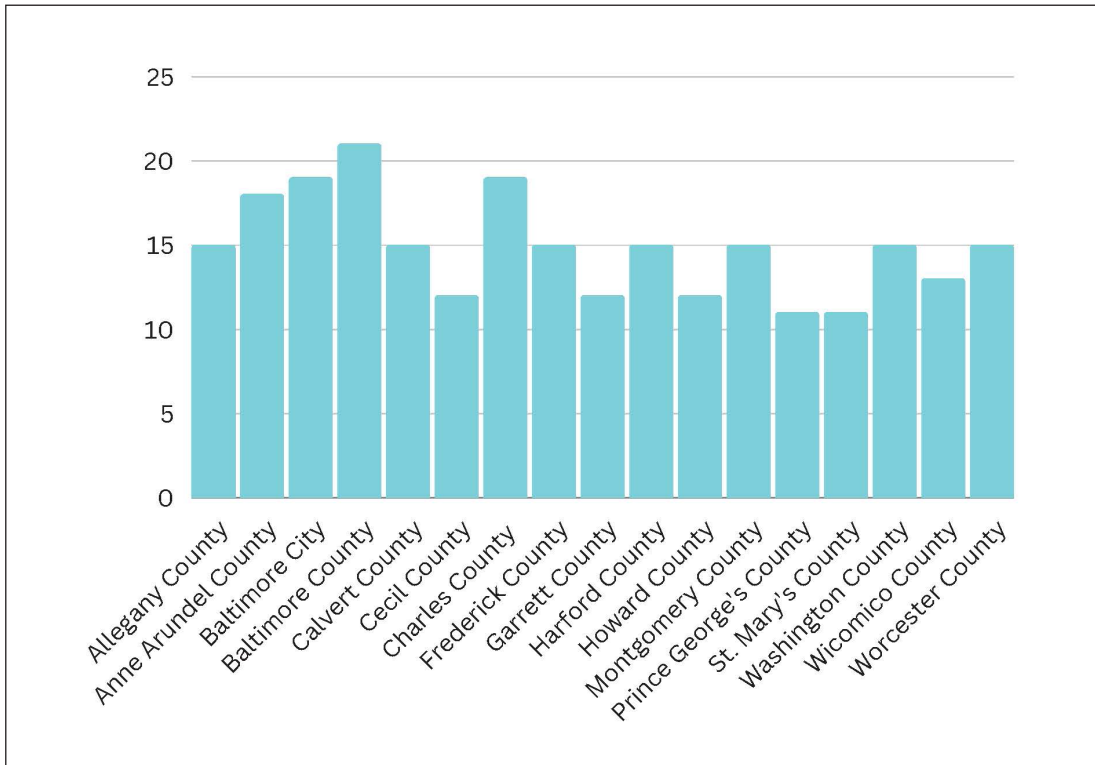
And the counties without a local commission are:

- Caroline County
- Carroll County
- Dorchester County
- Kent County
- Queen Anne's County
- Somerset County
- Talbot County

**The first local commissions were created in 1972 in Washington, Montgomery, and Prince George's Counties, while the most recent local commission to be created was in Baltimore City in 2006.**



The local commissions have varying numbers of members, determined by their authorizing statutes. The counties with the fewest commissioners are Prince George's County and St. Mary's County, with 11 commissioners, while Baltimore County has the greatest number of commissioners at 21.



Local commissions also have varying goals and responsibilities determined by their authorizing statutes. These include:

- assisting in identifying and working to find solutions to the problems and concerns of women and promoting the equality of all women (Allegany County)
- cooperating with the County Executive, governmental agencies, and private industry in programs beneficial to women (Anne Arundel County)
- conducting research, policy analysis, and public information and education programs and activities to assist in addressing the needs of women (Baltimore City)
- promoting experiences and opportunities by which women can develop their skills, continue their education, and re-enter the career field of their choice (Calvert County)
- among many others

Local Commissions have been hard at work for women in Maryland. Some of the initiatives that these commissions have been working on include:



## STATE-LOCAL COLLABORATION

The State Commission for Women collaborates with the local Commissions for Women in conducting research on the needs of women in the various regions of the state, sharing advocacy strategies appropriate for advisory boards, collaborating on projects and programs, and providing a vehicle for the voices of the women in each of Maryland's 24 regions.

When conducting state-wide initiatives, the MCW has found that in those jurisdictions without a local Commission for Women the participation rates in surveys, public forums, etc. is far less than in those where a local CFW exists. For example, in the 2021- 2022 study on the impact of the pandemic on women in Maryland, 382 survey responses were received from Garrett County whose population is less than 30,000 while only 69 women of Carroll County, whose population is almost 174,000, participated in the survey.

# 2023 CFW Roundtable Meeting – June 1, 2023

The Maryland Commission for Women convenes an annual CFW Roundtable Meeting, inviting all the city and county Commissions for Women (CFWs) in the state to share information about their projects, priorities, initiatives and strategies. Commissions for Women are each established independently by the government of a jurisdiction (state, county or city). They are advisory boards to that government, and their commissioners are typically appointed by the executive of that government and serve as volunteers to provide a voice for the women and girls of that jurisdiction into the deliberations of that government. However, each CFW is created differently – some are established by law, some by an executive order; some have funding and staff; some are provided very few public resources to carry out their work.

In Maryland, there are 24 major jurisdictions – 23 counties and Baltimore City. There is now a total of 17 county/city CFWs in our state. Only California boasts more.

Fourteen of those 17 CFWs joined the meeting with 55 commissioners attending. They received an inspiring greeting from Maryland's First Lady, Dawn Moore, and an informative briefing from Ruth Howard of the National Associations for Commissions for Women. The rest of the meeting was devoted to the roundtable discussion, in which the CFW representatives shared their priorities, initiatives and challenges.

Below is a brief summary of the reports of each of the participating CFWs, in alphabetical order.

## Allegany County

Allegany County CFW has received a grant to start a mentoring program for young women in the community. It has taken many years of struggling to develop a plan to establish this mentorship program and get it off the ground. The challenge now is to find mentors in the area who can agree to mentor these young ladies and stay throughout the program. The CFW plans to start with career education, partnering with Allegany College of Maryland, taking on just five mentees at a time and with a rotation of students. Each one of the of the mentees will receive a \$500 grant to use throughout the mentorship, whether for vehicle repair needed to get to and from work when they graduate or help with childcare expenses or clothing for interviews.

## Anne Arundel County

Anne Arundel County CFW has three areas that are priorities this year. One is a legislative committee that works with MLAW to focus on advocacy and letter writing campaigns that support laws important to women. The second priority is a women's and girls' empowerment organization started this year - a mentorship program that provides women's career panels in high schools. This committee is now considering offering the panel in middle schools as well and will spend the summer making this pilot into a repeatable process that they can then move throughout the county and hopefully participate in all of the high schools and middle schools. The third priority is Survivor Advocacy and Victim Education (SAVE). The CFW has expanded the program to reach not only victims of trafficking, but also domestic abuse and domestic violence victims.

One of the biggest challenges this year is that the county executive has placed a moratorium on bringing new members onto the commission so that commissioners who leave are not being replaced. The commission can have 18 commissioners, but there are only eight serving now.

## Baltimore City

This newly activated CFW had its first meeting May 31. It has 19 members from diverse backgrounds. One priority is monitoring the workforce of Baltimore City and promoting equal pay for equal work. Another priority is providing advice to the Mayor and City Council on the concerns of women living in Baltimore City. The CFW is evaluating policies and programs with a gender equity lens ensuring that women are involved in all considerations. The biggest challenge right now is that this is a new commission working with the city to develop its budget.

## Baltimore County

The CFW's budget was passed, and funds were provided to develop a working group of collaborators focusing on violence and sexual assault, human trafficking, and child and elder abuse. The group will examine various models of Family Justice Centers around the country to better serve survivors of violence. Human trafficking has been a priority for the last year two years. The CFW supported legislation mandating training and reporting for hospitality workers in hotels and motels. Now it is focused on transportation workers. All the CFWs are urged to join in encouraging the Department of Transportation to provide training for all employees in transportation facilities, learning to identify, report and rescue individuals who are traveling against their will. The CFW also supports the Woman of the Year awards that honor women who have served their community. It also produces a resource guide that is updated every year and ensures that it is available on all communication platforms around the county.

## Calvert County

Calvert County CFW holds a Women of the World ceremony each year that recognizes outstanding women in the county, and this year included a 14-year-old girl. Another priority is the CareerBuilder program, a three-part series of seminars focused on resume building, job search, and negotiating salary and interview tips. The CFW also held a Women's Health Expo, attended by almost 500, where it partnered with Calvert Hospital and the Health Department. The CFW sponsors a clothes closet that provides needed job interview attire for woman getting back into the workforce. Its challenges are improving visibility through marketing and advertising.

## Charles County

This CFW is developing a program to support foster children in Charles County. It held a housing forum and is now redesigning the program to bring the workshop back to the community and provide information on housing and renters' rights. It is also revamping its clothes closet for victims of domestic violence, where it partners with the Church of Hope in Waldorf. It is also refurbishing the area that was offered to them by the church, partnering with the pastor to do a grand opening. The CFW plans to hold a Women's Empowerment Summit this fall to address mental health issues and to provide its first scholarship program. Its challenge is developing more community involvement.

## Frederick County

Years ago, the Commission for Women started a mentoring program on a very small scale. Over the past 15 years, it has grown and is now fully incorporated with the local community college. A priority for the past year was the Outreach Committee establishing more strategies for using social media. The CFW is actively advising its County Council on legislation. The Commission also added a Voter Outreach Committee and holds its signature awards program in March, Women's History Month, presenting an award to two or three women of note in the community. Another priority project is the She Leads Program for high school girls, providing a series of podcasts focused on high-school related issues including the effects of social media and time management. Its challenges include marketing its events, getting turnout at events, becoming well known, and fully filling the commission with diverse people who want to be actively involved.

## Garrett County

Garrett County CFW honors three women each year at its annual Hall of Fame event. It provides scholarships to five students who are at least two years out of high school and continuing their education. It also has a Woman of Tomorrow award program for a high school student. It continues to partner with other organizations in the community with an outreach program on Women's Equality Day (WED). Last year it was combined with an ongoing art exhibit, some diversity and equality issues, and included a panel of women from three different walks of life. The CFW will partner with the same organizations in the coming year with AAUW as the lead organization. This year the focus will be on women in the workplace and economic empowerment for women, offering many workshops for women of varying stages in the workforce. Finally, the commissioners hope to mentor students in one of the middle schools and continuing the program into high school.

One concern is that there is no domestic violence program or shelter or a recovery house for women in the county. Another issue is a lack of visibility for the 15-member CFW which creates challenges in recruiting new members. Commissioners are term limited and several members' terms will expire soon, leaving the CFW with only seven commissioners, so it is necessary to recruit new members soon.

## Harford County

Harford County CFW conducted a substantial benchmark study reaching out to CFWs across the United States to learn their projects, their priorities, and their struggles, etc. Some of their commissioners were able to present the report in Annapolis last year. One thing the CFW is working on this year is expanding its Women of Tomorrow awards honoring more than 20 middle school and high school girls in their community, providing them a scholarship to support their continued education. The CFW's challenges include a large turnover of commissioners, occasioned by the advent of the new administration. Additionally, within the last year or two, the CFW was notified that it may no longer use the "Woman of Tomorrow" name for its program because that name has been trademarked and the CFW was served a cease-and-desist order. The program has been re-named "Leading Women."

The commissioners are trying to narrow down the number of topics and identify priorities that they feel are important to the women in their county. Before COVID, the CFW held successful panel discussion events, but since COVID, the CFW has only organized zoom meetings. However, it is considering returning to in-person events in the Fall. This CFW, like others, is working to increase its visibility in the community.

## Montgomery County

Montgomery County CFW continues to advise the County Executive, County Council, the public, and agencies of the county, state and federal governments regarding women's issues, providing advocacy from a local and state perspective. In FY24, it will receive funding from the county government to pay interns, who are so helpful, especially on the legislative and reporting side. Its Human Trafficking Prevention Committee continues to train, support and work with community-based organizations and the Montgomery County Police Department in combatting human trafficking, and it continues to collaborate with the Family Justice Center (FJC) to address domestic violence issues. The Commission supports the FJC's Choose Respect event which educates middle and high school students about healthy dating. In collaboration with Montgomery Women, the CFW had its yearly Women Making History event, that acknowledges 31 women in March, Women's History Month, on its social media spaces, and it held the culminating event this year with its first in-person celebration of all 31 women. It publishes a weekly online newsletter with a subscription that is now up to 20,000 individuals. It uses Instagram and Facebook with frequent updates. The Commission recognizes talented girls in the county each year through its Girl Power Writing contest, in partnership with the Montgomery County



Libraries. It also offers in-person and virtual webinars on such topics as financial wellness, self-defense, separation and divorce, career and workforce development. Each January, the CFW organizes its signature event, the annual Women's Legislative Briefing. The key areas for both women and girls this year were economic and financial security, women and leadership training, workforce issues, women's health, safety and security. Before the pandemic, the CFW sponsored a re-entry prison group where women were able to meet with a licensed clinical social worker. The CFW will examine whether there is still a need and will consider incorporating it back into its programs.

An area of challenge for this CFW is that it can't do everything, including responding to all the calls to its office. It is important to continue an even deeper dive with community-based organizations to ensure that the needs of women and girls are met, with the CFW focusing on "macro" issues such as legislation, program, and policy concerns, while service providers address these concerns at the "micro" level – helping individuals in need.

### Prince George's County

One of the challenges for the commission is the turnover of its own commissioners, as replenishing the Commission doesn't occur immediately. Commissioners must go through a process of appointment by the County Executive, then must be approved by the County Council. So, the CFW has been down several commissioners this year. As a result, it has focused on partnerships. It collaborated with the Commission for Fathers, Men and Boys on a couple of activities, including a community fair at the end of last summer. It co-sponsored an event in February for families, and one with the Department of Health to hold a Youth Mental Health Expo. It will be working with the County Executive's office on a "Prince George's County Goes Pink" campaign in honor of breast cancer awareness. Its legislative committee collaborated with MLAW in its legislative campaign and it adopted those bills that mirrored the goals in Prince George's County. It posted the outcomes from the legislative session on its website. The commission publishes a monthly newsletter with information of interest to women and girls in Prince George's County.

In September most of the current commissioners will transition off the CFW with many new commissioners coming on board.

### St. Mary's County

Whenever there is something important relating to women or women's history, the CFW encourages the county government to issue proclamations in recognition. It coordinates the Jane Hale Cypress Scholarship fund that is now endowed at the College of Southern Maryland, helping residents return to college to earn a degree, in addition to a Women's History Month banquet, the Women of the Year, and Tomorrow's Woman awards programs.

Last year, during the pandemic, it had a virtual event recognizing the Health Department Director's leadership in the fight against COVID, presenting the Director with the Hero Awards. In 2023 the CFW recognized one of the local food pantries with the Hero Award.

As the CFW addresses important issues concerning women or families, it partners with the Homeless Prevention Board in the county, the Family Violence Coordinating Council, and the Violence, Trauma and Injury Council. It also recently recruited a young woman to participate on behalf of the CFW in MLAW activities. Annually the CFW visits the local Veterans home and recognizes the female veterans and/or female spouses of a veteran.

## Washington County

Last year and continuing this year, the CFW will co-sponsor a TEDx program. TEDx is an offshoot of the official TED programs, but it was a half a day and featured five women of achievement in this county. This will be the CFW's signature event. It also provides women's achievement awards and partners with other organizations on various programs.

One of the CFW's challenges is enhancing its visibility so it is focused on increasing its social media presence. Commissioners also attend their County Commission meetings and use the public comment time as an opportunity to get the CFW's information in the public view.

## Wicomico County

This year, the CFW has worked to increase its visibility with the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Salisbury Committee. It has focused on the lack of affordable childcare as a major barrier to women's return to work after the pandemic, the need for preschool for children ages three and four and the closure of more daycare providers on the Eastern Shore. The CFW organized a luncheon for the end of the legislative session for local legislators and sponsored an open house to showcase one business that permits women to bring their children to work at no cost to the business. The CFW also requested a Proclamation for Women's History Month and provided pins to the elected officials and government employees on International Women's Day, which also marked the Commission's one year anniversary.

Among the challenges facing the commission are that it is less than a year old, but already some of its members have dropped off, and that it needs funding and resources to carry out its work.

## Looking Forward

As fiscal/program year 2024 began, the MCW welcomed six new commissioners appointed by Governor Wes Moore. To make possible the inclusion of the new commissioners in the determination of priorities, goals and activities for the coming year, the MCW scheduled a special planning meeting in July 2023. At this meeting, the MCW established its three working committees.

**Policy and Legislation (PAL)** – to coordinate the MCW’s legislative activity in the Maryland General Assembly

**Achievement and Recognition Commemoration (ARC)** – to coordinate the Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame and the Maryland Young Women Leaders Awards for 2024

**Advocacy, Collaboration and Engagement (ACE)** – to position the MCW in a very visible way; and to research and develop MCW position statements on issues that arise during the year.

The Commission has set a busy and substantive agenda for itself for FY 24, but its new commissioners bring great energy and enthusiasm, matched by the commitment, dedication and experience of the continuing commissioners and so it starts this new year with great promise and opportunity.

The Maryland Commission for Women is very much looking forward to working with the new administration lead by Governor Wes Moore and Lt. Governor Aruna Miller, and to collaborating with the new DHS leadership headed by Secretary Raphael López.



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Wes Moore, Governor  
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor  
Rafael López, Secretary

