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MARYLAND COMMISSION *for* WOMEN

ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

MCW Annual Report

Table of Contents

Message from the Secretary.....	4
Message from Chair and Executive Director.....	5
Commission Leadership and Membership.....	6
About the Commission.....	7
Meet the Staff	8
Strategic Plan for FY25.....	10
Research, Policy and Legislation Committee.....	13
I. Policy Agenda	
Women in the Workforce, Women's Health, and The Care Economy.....	13
Building Policy Capacity.....	14
II. Publications	
2025 Women in Elected Office Report.....	17
2025 Legislative Session Women's Issues Report.....	18
2025 Maryland Women's Hall of Fame.....	20
III. Legislative Agenda & Advocacy	
Commission Night in Annapolis.....	21
Legislative Agenda.....	21
Legislative Testimony.....	22
Outreach, Awards & Recognition Committee.....	24
I. Strengthening Partnerships	
Sponsorships and Events.....	24
II. Outreach & Education	
Public Speaking Program.....	25
Supporting Higher Education.....	28
Partnerships with Local Governments, State Agencies and Public Officials.....	29
III. Building a Communications Network	
Monthly Newsletters.....	31
Social Media.....	31
IV. Local Commissions	
Partnerships, Opportunities and Strategic Support	32
V. Acknowledging Women's Accomplishments	
Young Women Leaders Award.....	34
Maryland Women's Hall of Fame.....	38

Message from the Secretary

Maryland Department of Human Services
Rafael López



On behalf of the Maryland Department of Human Services, I am honored to present the 2025 Annual Report of the Maryland Commission for Women. This was a challenging year for women's rights across our country — but Maryland is showing a better way. Under Governor Moore's leadership, we are taking action through policies and programs to empower women and advance their access to political power, economic opportunity, and reproductive freedom.

Under the leadership of Dr. LaShaune Stitt, Maryland's Commission for Women developed and executed a strategic plan aligned with Moore-Miller Administration's values. The Commission set out to *Be Everywhere, Be Innovative, and Move Urgently*. It created strategic paths to withstand the pressures of a national backlash against women's rights, and we are proud to support them in this urgent work.

To meet this moment, we partnered with the Commission to double their team and expand their reach. The commission reestablished their internship program and created paid professional opportunities for young people passionate about advancing gender equality. Commissioners and their team led community outreach on pay equity, childcare affordability, women in leadership, and reproductive healthcare access.

While women's rights are being rolled back in some parts of our country, Maryland has continued to model a path forward, electing three women to our Congressional delegation, and affirming the right to reproductive freedom by an overwhelming 76% vote. The Commission released the first-ever **Maryland Women in Elected Office: A 2025 Status Report**, a new tool for policymakers, advocates, and Marylanders working toward women's equal representation in public life.

In response to attacks on women's healthcare, the Commission established the **Maryland Collaborative to Advance Implementation of Coverage of Over-the-Counter Birth Control**. This convening of organizational and state agency stakeholders will implement Maryland's first-in-the-nation law requiring insurance coverage for over-the-counter birth control to ensure reproductive freedom for all Marylanders.

We are proud of the urgency with which the Maryland Commission for Women has moved in 2025. We look forward to continuing our partnership in 2026 to create a world where every woman and girl thrives on their own terms.

In service,


 Rafael López
 Secretary

Message from Chair and Executive Director



Dr. LaShaune Stitt
Chair



Ariana Kelly
Executive Director

The Maryland Commission for Women made great progress in fiscal year 2025! With five new Commissioners, a new Chair and Executive Committee leadership team, and a new Executive Director, the Commission had an unprecedented opportunity to reflect, renew and refresh our approach to our statutory mission. We came together at a retreat in October and developed a bold strategic plan. That plan, and the tactics we used to achieve our goals, are shared in the following report.

At the heart of the plan is a commitment to re-center the work of the Commission within our legal mandate. The Commission established a committee structure to bring new leadership and engagement opportunities to all Commissioners and to better utilize the wealth of expertise that each Commissioner brings to this work. Across committees, we prioritized strengthening our relationships with community partners, advocacy groups and state agencies. We also committed to reinvigorating our communications infrastructure so we can better fulfill our responsibility as a clearinghouse on women's rights work in Maryland. The Commission is grateful to have additional staff resources in 2025. Our plan includes a dedication to supporting and training a completely new staff and developing a robust and fulfilling internship program.

The Outreach, Awards and Recognition committee focused on renewing community education and outreach and revamping the Young Women Awards program. We hosted our annual Maryland Women's Hall of Fame induction in partnership with the Governor and Mrs. Moore at Government House. Meanwhile the Research, Policy and Legislation committee zeroed in on publishing relevant new research and strengthening our policy and legislative capacity. The Commission completed three research publications this year. Additionally, we developed a process for evaluating and tracking legislation and brought Commissioners and legislative champions together in Annapolis.

Looking ahead to fiscal year 2026, the Commission will engage in new policy work established this year, including the Over-the-Counter Birth Control Collaborative, signed into law in May 2025. We will continue to innovate our awards program, this year focusing on modernizing the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame, and promoting research on women's empowerment. The Commission is excited to see what the next year will bring.

Dr. LaShaune Stitt, Chair & Ariana Kelly, Executive Director

Commission Leadership and Membership



Commissioners, July 2024 - June 2025

LaShaune Stitt, Ed.D., Chair
 Patricia McHugh Lambert, Esq., First Vice Chair
 Christine Lee, Ph.D., Pharm.D., Second Vice Chair
 Tazeen Ahmad, M.A.
 Pier Blake
 Sharon Blugis, M.S.
 Judy A. Carbone, M.Ed.
 Jonathon Carrington, M.A., LCPC, LPC
 Gloria Dent
 Judith Emmel
 Tekisha Dwan Everette Ph.D., MPA, MPH, CPH
 Maggi G. Gaines, M.A., M.Ed.

Linda Han
 Jodi Kelber, Ph.D.
 Sarah Ackerstein Klein, JD, M.A.
 Lauren M. Lambert, MBA
 Brenda McChriston, M.A., SPHR, SHRM, SCP
 Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz, Ph.D.
 Stacey A. Rebbert
 Nykidra "Nyki" Robinson, MPA
 Evelyne S. Steward
 Lenita Walker
 Monica Watkins

Commission Staff

The Honorable Ariana Kelly, Executive Director
 Brett Jordan, MPP, Program Manager
 Genesis Franco, Management Associate
 Camille Fabiyi, Policy & Program Assistant
 Alex Osterhues, Senior Research Intern
 Hannah Breslau, Program Intern

About the Commission

The Maryland Commission for Women (MCW) was established in 1965, modeled after the President's Commission on the Status of Women created by President John F. Kennedy. Now celebrating sixty years of advancing solutions for Maryland women, the Maryland Commission for Women operates as an office within the Department of Human Services.

The Commission is a 25-member advisory board, with Commissioners appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Maryland State Senate. Half of the Commissioners are nominated as representatives of women's organizations across the state. The other half are individuals with expertise in women's rights research and advocacy. The vision of the Commission is executed by a four-person staff and a dedicated team of volunteers and interns.

As the Commission has evolved over the decades, its core mission remains the same: to advance the economic opportunity, social and political rights, and overall well-being of women and girls throughout Maryland. The legislative mandate of the Commission is to work directly with government agencies, community organizations, and the public to:

- Advise the executive and legislative branches of government through formal recommendations and legislative testimony
- Stimulate and encourage study and review of women's status
- Direct attention to critical problems facing women
- Recommend methods of overcoming discrimination
- Encourage women to become candidates for public office
- Support effective methods for women to develop skills, education and training
- Secure appropriate recognition of women's accomplishments and contributions
- Serve as a statewide clearinghouse for women's rights activities
- Make surveys and appoint advisory committees in fields including education, social services, labor and employment, law enforcement, health and safety, legal rights, family relations, and human relations

In May 2025, the Commission for Women hired a new Executive Director, former state Senator Ariana Kelly. The Commissioners and Executive Director Kelly worked throughout the year to build up the staff, reinstitute a productive committee structure, revitalize and expand programming, and strengthen community outreach efforts. This work was all guided by a strategic plan developed in Fall 2024 focused on aligning the work of the Commission with its statutory mandate.

Meet the Staff

In FY25, Executive Director Kelly was able to double the Commission's full time staff, from two to four. This growth was only possible thanks to a meaningful commitment of resources from the Moore-Miller Administration and the Department of Human Services.

This investment has increased the Commission's capacity and enabled the Commission to increase its focus on its core mission of producing substantive research and policy work as well as conducting our annual awards programs.

In addition to full time staff, the Commission also worked with multiple graduate and undergraduate student interns on a variety of policy and outreach projects.

Ariana Kelly, Executive Director

Ariana took the helm of the Commission for Women after retiring from the Maryland Senate at the end of FY24. During her 14-year legislative career, Ariana passed more than 100 pieces of legislation, including two dozen Commission for Women priority bills. Prior to her legislative service, Ariana had a long career in women's rights advocacy and communications, having served as Executive Director of NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland, National Campaign Director for MomsRising, and Executive Producer for PBS' To The Contrary.

Brett Jordan, Program Manager

Brett joined the Commission in May 2025 to lead the Commission's programmatic work, including the Over-The-Counter Birth Control Collaborative, Maryland Women's Hall of Fame, and our policy internship program. Brett brings deep expertise in reproductive health and insurance policy, as well as the skills to execute research and reports for the MCW's wide range of policy interests.

Genesis Franco, Management Associate

Genesis joined the Commission in November 2024. Genesis brings a keen eye for details and an innovative and enthusiastic spirit to the difficult job of keeping the Commission running. In addition to managing MCW finance and operations, Genesis is the face of our office for Commissioner and public engagement and lead staff person on the Commission newsletter, County Commissions for Women, and Latino/Hispanic outreach.

Camille Fabiyi, Policy and Program Assistant

Camille joined the Commission as a full time staff member in June 2025 after a full year as a Commission intern. Camille's dual degree in History and Women's Studies, as well as her internships with Delegate Emily Shetty and the House Health and Government Operations Committee have prepared her well to staff the Commission's legislative committee, lead on social media and campus outreach, and work on celebrating women's history as Policy and Program Assistant.

Alex Osterhues, Senior Research Intern

Alex joined the MCW team in June 2024. They are in their Senior year at Tulane University with a major in Neuroscience. Alex was the lead researcher for the 2025 Women in Elected Office Report and conducted a demographic analysis of our Young Women Award winners to inform our program reform. Alex also tracked data for our social media and email newsletter growth. They will be applying to medical school in the fall with a goal of working in reproductive and gender health.

Hannah Bresleau, Programs Intern

Hannah joined the MCW team in June 2025. Hannah is leading a project on the history of MCW policy and program accomplishments in partnership with the Maryland State Archives. Hannah also serves on the Board of Reproductive Justice Maryland and is a graduate student in Public Policy at the University of Maryland.

Rae Weinstein, Research Intern

Rae is a Junior majoring in Political Science at the University of Florida. She conducted data analysis on the Question 1 referendum breaking down support for reproductive freedom by region, county, and state legislative district.

Stella Klein, High School Intern

Stella is a junior in high school, where she is a full IB student and writes for the student newspaper. She is passionate about women's issues and getting younger women involved in protecting women's rights. She engaged in research and outreach around our Young Women Awards program and is continuing to work with the Commission on engaging high school students in women's empowerment.



Strategic Plan for FY25

Over the summer of 2024, incoming Chair LaShaune Stitt and Executive Director Ariana Kelly met individually with each Commissioner to establish relationships and assess their interests and expertise. This work laid the foundation for our fall strategic planning.

In October, the Commission for Women, under the leadership of Chair Stitt, met for a strategic planning session hosted by First Vice Chair Pat Lambert at PK Law in Towson. The Commissioners, supported by Executive Director Kelly, reviewed our statutory mandate and its alignment with existing MCW programs. From this work, we identified areas for growth and focus for FY25.

Key Opportunities Identified:

- Commissioner expertise is vast and underutilized. The MCW committed itself to utilizing a committee system to develop new leadership opportunities for Commissioners and volunteers to advance the work of the Commission.
- Commissioner recruitment should focus on fulfilling the statutory mandate that 12 Commissioners be nominated by women's rights organizations across the state. This will make it easier to fulfill the clearinghouse role and increase the expertise among Commissioners and the potential impact of the Commission.
- Among the MCW's nine statutory obligations, the Commission identified one that received the vast majority of staff and Commissioner attention. This was our work to secure appropriate recognition of women's accomplishments and contributions. This has been fulfilled through two awards programs and participation in the MD250 Commission.
- The Commissioners proposed that goals for FY25 should include restructuring staff and Commissioner responsibilities to focus equal attention to the Commission's eight other statutory responsibilities.
- After evaluating all existing Commission programs, resources and pressing needs facing Maryland women, the Commission identified three statutory responsibilities to increase focus on in FY25:
 - 1) Stimulate and encourage research on Maryland women
 - 2) Encourage women to become candidates for public office
 - 3) Serve as a statewide clearinghouse for women's rights activities

The Commissioners divided the program work between two standing Committees: Research, Policy and Legislation, chaired by Commissioners Christine Lee and Monica Watkins, and Outreach, Awards and Recognition, chaired by Commissioner Pier Blake. Each Commissioner served on one of the two standing committees. Each standing committee became responsible for programs in half of our legislatively mandated areas.

The Commission strategic plan included Commission-wide goals, as well as specific goals for each standing committee.

A. Commission Wide Goals

1. Equip staff with the time and tools they need to succeed as they grow.
2. Reflect on statutory responsibilities and let them guide Commission work.
3. Divide the Commission into two committees, each with responsibility for half of the statutory mandate. Create more leadership opportunities for Commissioners.
4. Strengthen relationships with the women's rights community and state government to take advantage of our unique niche.
5. Utilize the March Women's History Month event to fulfill multiple statutory responsibilities by revamping it into an awards ceremony that puts focus on the Commission's policy and outreach goals.

B. Research, Policy and Legislation Committee

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| • Christine Lee, Chair (July 2024 -May 2025) | • Tekisha Everette |
| • Monica Watkins, Chair (June 2025- present) | • Lauren Lambert |
| • Maggi Gaines, Legislative Lead | • Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz |
| • Sarah Klein, Policy Lead | • LaShaune Stitt |
| • Sharon Blugis | • Lenita Walker |
| • Jonathon Carrington | |

2024-2025 Goals

1. Develop an organized list of policy priorities related to women's rights in Maryland to guide our policy work in 2025 and 2026.
2. Continue with policy work during the interim season through work on legislative implementation, meeting facilitation, and community outreach.
3. Use legislative and policy work to strengthen partnerships with women's rights advocacy organizations, state agencies and Women Legislators of Maryland.
4. Establish a more visible presence in Annapolis, including through conducting a February Annapolis Visit for Commissioners.
5. Develop and distribute a publication with the Q1 reproductive rights vote by district and new information on women in elected office in Maryland.
6. Develop a system for tracking legislation impacting women and share with organizational partners as appropriate.
7. Develop a formal review process for legislation. Support and oppose legislation as necessary and in coalition wherever possible.

C. 2024-2025 Outreach, Awards and Recognition Committee

- Pier Blake, Chair
- Gloria Dent, Awards Lead
- Monica Watkins, Advocacy/Outreach Lead
- Tazeen Ahmad
- Judy Carbone
- Judi Emmel
- Linda Han
- Jodi Kelber
- Pat Lambert
- Brenda McChriston
- Stacey Rebbert
- Nykidra Robinson
- Evelyne Steward
- Lenita Walker

2024-2025 Goals

1. Strengthen partnerships with women's rights advocacy organizations, state agencies, and local commissions through public speaking, communications, sponsorships, outreach, educational programs, and awards programs.
2. Ensure local Commissions are part of our work.
3. Reform the Young Women Awards outreach, nomination, selection, and awards process to be more inclusive of underrepresented groups and better integrated with our specific statutory responsibilities and our outreach and policy goals.
4. Work with the Foundation for the Maryland Commission for Women to increase Young Women Awards grant amounts to \$2,000 per awardee to have a more meaningful impact.
5. Maintain the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame by focusing a second year on "Maryland's Firsts." Modernize Maryland Women's Hall of Fame outreach and selection processes in 2026.
6. Host an exceptional March Women's History Month event in Annapolis that is aligned with our statutory responsibilities, our 2025 policy and outreach goals, and inclusive of our community partners.

I. The Commission for Women Policy Agenda

Policy Priority Areas

How do we define what is a women's issue? And how as a Commission do we prioritize our limited resources? In 2025, Commissioners developed a framework rooted in our statutory mission and influenced by the pressing issues of the day to assist the Commission in prioritizing our policy work.

GOAL 1: Develop an organized list of policy priorities related to women's rights in Maryland to guide our policy work in 2025 and 2026.

In line with its mission to advance the social, political, and economic equality of women and girls in Maryland, the Maryland Commission for Women focused its policy work this year around three core areas. Through these policy efforts, the Commission worked to remove barriers, strengthen families, and ensure Maryland women have the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.

Women in the Workforce

- Pay Equity & Gender-Based Occupational Segregation
- Justice-Involved Women and Re-Entry
- Workplace Discrimination
- Women in Elected Office

The Care Economy

- Caregiving
- Paid Family and Medical Leave
- Child Care

Women's Health

- Health Equity
- Mental Health
- Reproductive Health
- Intimate Partner Violence
- Sexual Violence



Building Policy Capacity

GOAL 2: Continue with policy work during the interim season through work on legislative implementation, meeting facilitation, and community outreach.

Once the Commission identified its priorities, it was able to allocate staff and Commissioner energy to dig deeper into these priority areas. This work became more feasible thanks to the increased staffing the Commission received in April 2025.

Policy Presentations to Commission

With this strategic plan, Commissioners committed to using full Commission meetings to engage in big picture conversations about women's issues. Committee time would be used to move forward with the day to day work of the Commission. *The Research, Policy and Legislation Committee* was charged with identifying and inviting the right speakers for Commission meetings based on our strategic goals.

We invited panels of advocates from each of the policy buckets to... our Commission meetings to discuss issues. We also invited major advocacy coalition partners to present to the Commission to strengthen relationships and cooperation. These presentations were followed by a question and answer session and often a robust conversation about how the Commission could be helpful in the work of our partners.

- Catherine Hill, Executive Director of Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) presented on the priorities for this organization. MLAW started as a committee of the Maryland Commission for Women and became independent in 2004.
- Delegate Sarah Wolek, Treasurer of the Women Legislators of Maryland, presented on the work and priorities of the Women's Caucus, including their childcare agenda.
- Shalini Arora, Deputy Director and Yetunde Olobatuyi from the Social Security Administration's Office of Adult Services and the Commission on Caregiving presented to the Commission on challenges facing caregivers across Maryland. They also updated the Commission on the work of the Commission on Caregiving.
- Beth Morrow, Policy Director for Maryland Family Network, presented on issues impacting families with young children, including childcare accessibility and affordability.
- Former Commissioner Rosanna Vogt presented about the origins of the Commission's partnership with the Maryland Women Moving Forward Pre-Release Conference.
- Senator Mary Washington presented to the Commissioners about the status of her work on women's pre-release programming in Maryland.
- Caryn Hines, Community Outreach Coordinator for the Secretary of State's Address Confidentiality Program, presented to the Commission about this important program for survivors of domestic abuse

Over-the-Counter Birth Control Collaborative Implementation

Maryland was the first state to require insurance coverage of over the counter (OTC) contraception, but implementation represents an ongoing challenge across the state. This session, the General Assembly passed HB939/SB674, establishing the Over the Counter Birth Control Collaborative as a project of the Maryland Commission for Women. The Collaborative consists of 20 stakeholders, from within and outside of Maryland state government, who will make recommendations to the General Assembly to fully implement OTC access to contraception.

In May, Commission Chair LaShaune Stitt and Commissioner Gloria Dent joined DHS Secretary Rafael López and Principal Deputy Secretary Carnitra White, Executive Director Ariana Kelly, Program Manager Brett Jordan and Policy & Program Assistant Camille Fabiyi at the bill signing for House Bill 939 and Senate Bill 674. Governor Moore signed the legislation, sponsored by Senator Shelly Hettleman and Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk.



A subcommittee of Commissioners, chaired by Christine Lee, PharmD, was established to oversee this work. The Commission hired Brett Jordan as Program Manager, who will staff the Collaborative and manage the completion of two reports: an interim report due January 1, 2026 and a final report due December 1, 2027. The Collaborative will use stakeholder engagement to drive policy change that will benefit women across Maryland.

Justice-Involved Women & Women Moving Forward Conference

In fall 2025, the Maryland Commission for Women continued to support The Maryland Women Moving Forward Conference. Commissioner Lauren Lambert served as our liaison to the planning committee. This conference is held annually at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women (MCIW) in association with the National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ).

The pre-release re-entry programming is directed toward incarcerated women within 6 to 9 months of release at MCIW in Jessup, Maryland, and welcomes around 150 participants each year. It offers a structured, one-day conference experience with workshops, resources, networking, and community support designed to promote successful reintegration into society.

The MCW also began research for an update to our Status of Women in Maryland Report section on justice-involved women. This short report is expected to be published in October 2025.



JUSTICE-INVOLVED Maryland Women: A 2025 Status Report

Women involved with the justice system far too often fall between the cracks. They represent a small fraction of both incarcerated people and of the overall population of Maryland women, and discussions of each population frequently fail to include them. The Maryland Commission for Women is dedicated to bringing all Maryland women's stories to the forefront. This brief report updates our picture of women in Maryland involved

with the justice system, highlighting those who have been arrested or incarcerated.

Maryland has one facility that houses women convicted of a criminal offense. The Maryland Correctional Institution - Women (MCIW) is located in Jessup, Maryland, which straddles Howard and Anne Arundel counties. While women awaiting trial may be housed in other facilities, all women serving a state sentence do so at the MCIW.

NUMBER OF WOMEN ARRESTED FOR VARIOUS CRIMES IN MARYLAND (2023)

OFFENSE	NUMBER OF FEMALE ARRESTS	% OF ALL FEMALE ARRESTS	% OF TOTAL ARRESTS FOR THAT OFFENSE
Theft (Larceny, shoplifting, etc)	2951	12%	34%
Assault (simple or aggravated)	5690	23%	31%
Homicide	1	1%	17%
Drug-related (narcotic and alcohol-related)	4551	18%	24%

In 2023, the highest proportion of women (as compared to men) were arrested for theft-related offenses, accounting for 12% of all female arrests and 7% of male arrests. The largest number of women serving sentences were convicted of homicide, due primarily to the length of sentences for serious violent crimes. Therefore, women convicted of more minor offenses are less likely to be incarcerated at any given time, even though there are more of them.

THE AVERAGE WOMAN IN MCIW IN 2025:

AGE	RACE	JURISDICTION	LENGTH OF SENTENCE	LENGTH OF STAY
38.3	Black	Baltimore City	179.7 months	58.1 months

Maryland Child Trafficking Awareness Conference at Towson University



Chair LaShaune Stitt attended the Maryland Child Trafficking Awareness Conference, an event organized by the Governor's Office on Crime Prevention and Policy in collaboration with the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force. During the conference, she had the opportunity to speak with Alexandria Wall, Director of Human Trafficking Services at Safe Harbor Shelter.

II. Publications

In 2025, the Commission for Women prioritized research and publications. In addition to this Annual Report, we published three additional reports, each fulfilling goals within our strategic plan. In addition to publishing these reports, we also increased our report distribution efforts. Reports were distributed at community events, public speaking engagements, meetings and through newly developed email distribution lists.

GOAL 3: Use legislative and policy work to strengthen partnerships with women's rights advocacy organizations, state agencies and Women Legislators of Maryland.

GOAL 5: Develop and distribute a publication with the Question 1 reproductive rights vote by district and new information on women in elected office in Maryland.

Elected Women in Office: A 2025 Status Report

2025 marked an end to Maryland's eight year long stretch without any women in its Congressional delegation. To acknowledge this accomplishment, the Maryland Commission for Women released Elected Women in Office: A 2025 Status Report.

Did you know:

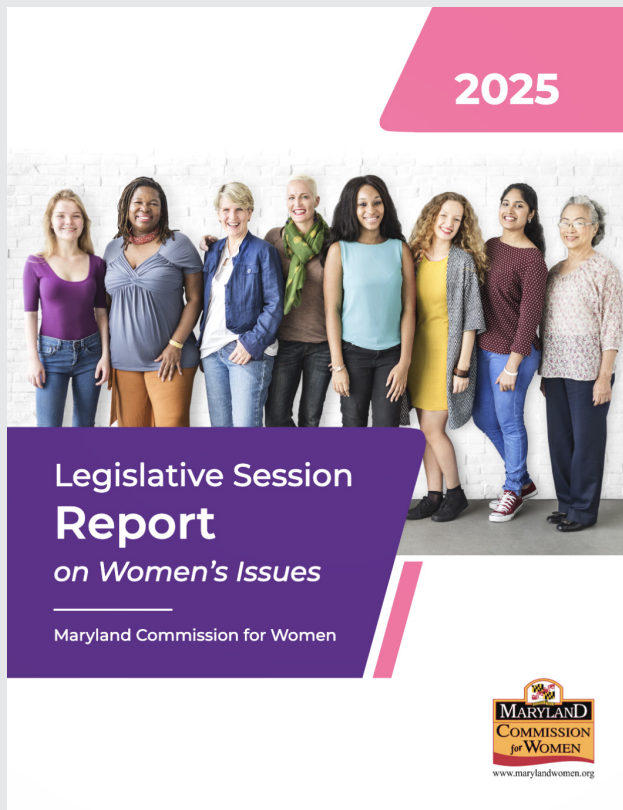
- 11 of the 24 jurisdictions in Maryland have no women on their County Council or Board of Commissioners.
- Maryland's largest jurisdiction, Montgomery County, is the only one with an elected Executive to have never had a woman in the role.
- Women make up 30% of the Maryland Senate and 45% of the Maryland House of Delegates.
- The majority of women legislators in the House are women of color.

This report tracks progress for women in elected office at the state and county levels across Maryland. Using clear graphics and visual data, this publication provides Marylanders, community leaders, policymakers and journalists with an accessible snapshot of where women are serving, where gaps remain, and how representation is changing over time.

The report also analyzes the historic Question 1 vote. This statewide referendum found 76% of Maryland voters supported adding reproductive freedom to the Maryland constitution. The referendum passed with a majority of support in 23 of 24 jurisdictions.



2025 Legislative Session Report on Women's Issues



As part of its commitment to support and inform advocates for the rights of women and girls in Maryland, the Maryland Commission for Women launched its inaugural Legislative Session Report on Women's Issues in 2025. This report is intended to serve as a resource to support advocates, policymakers, researchers, state agencies, and other interested stakeholders as they work to advance the rights of women in Maryland. It was distributed widely to advocacy groups, legislative staff, and state agency partners, as well as the general public.

The Commission tracked more than 50 bills that directly impacted the physical, social, economic, and political well-being of Maryland women and families. The Report on Women's Issues organizes this information into clear summaries of each bill's purpose and potential impact. It also highlights the bill sponsors and credits the advocacy coalitions that championed these efforts. Important reporting and implementation deadlines and bills to watch for next year are also included.

Successful legislation in 2025 included expanded protections for reproductive health, measures to improve equity in the workforce, and investments in caregiving support. The following bills impacting women in Maryland have now become law in 2025. To learn specific details, including sponsors and advocacy champions, please see our complete report.

Womens's Health

Healthcare Access & Health Equity

HB297 and SB5 Young Adult Insurance Subsidies Pilot
 HB783 and SB458 Implicit Bias and Structural Racism Training
 HB859 and SB611 Access to Insurance for Child Care Professionals

Maternal & Child Health

HB170 and SB213 MCH Population Health Improvement Fund
 HB334 and SB156 Workgroup on Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services
 HB838 and SB854 Licensed Direct-Entry Midwives
 HB1251 Doula and Birth Policy Transparency Act
 HB1380 and SB676 Perinatal Care Standards

Preventing Intimate Partner & Sexual Violence

HB1 and SB See Someone, Save Someone Act
 HB236 and SB92 Intentional Visual Surveillance
 HB675 and SB669 Rape Kit Testing - Tracking Program and Grant Fund
 HB1547 Barbers and Cosmetologists - DV Awareness Training
 SB360 Definition of Visual Representation and Civil Action

Reproductive Rights & Justice

HB930 and SB848 Public Health Abortion Grant Program
 HB939 and SB674 OTC Birth Control Collaborative
 HB1045 and SB940 Confidentiality of Medical Records - Updates

Women is Workforce & Society

Career Opportunities & Training

HB19 and SB216, Building Opportunities for Nurses Act
 HB265 and SB456 Qualification for the Maryland Dent-Care Program
 HB345 and SB175 Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact
 HB580 and SB164, Maryland State Firefighters Association
 HB840 and SB511 Pregnant and Parenting Students

Courts, Child Custody & Child Support

HB261 and SB110 Priority of Claims on an Estate - Unpaid Child Support
 HB275 Child Support - Multifamily Adjustment
 HB681 and SB15 Child Support - Driver's License Suspension
 HB881 and SB703 Family Investment Program - Child Support
 HB1191 and SB548 Child Custody - Determinations
 HB1440 Parental Accommodations

Pay Equity & Economic Equality

HB 500 and SB 426 Procurement Reform Act of 2025
 HB1018 and SB689 Home Mortgage Loans in Divorce
 HB1253 Department of Social and Economic Mobility
 HB 1483 and SB 923 High School Sports Officials - Payment and Fees

The Care Economy

Child Care

HB185 and SB359 Therapeutic Child Care Grant Program
 HB389 and SB516 Property Tax Exemption - Child Care Centers
 HB477 Child Care Centers - Regulatory Analysis
 HB785 Operation of Family Child Care Homes - Limitations
 HB1121 and SB687 Youth Transitioning From Foster Placement
 HB1343 AA County Property Tax - Child Care Centers
 HB1344 Assessment of State-Owned Facilities for Child Care Centers

Family and Medical Leave

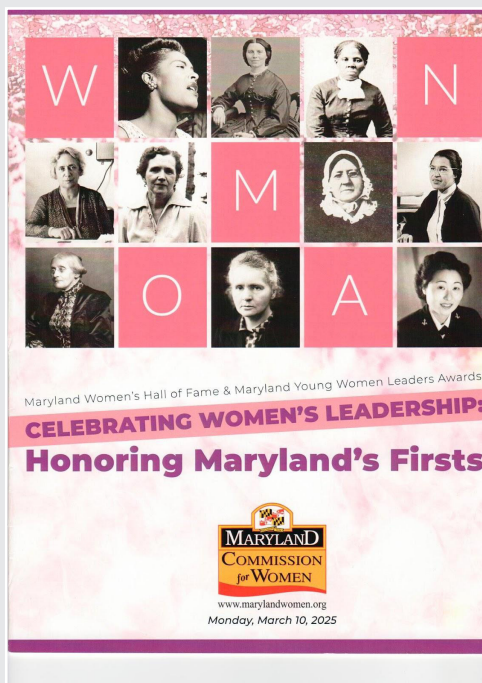
HB102 and SB225 FMLI - Revisions
 HB1503 Paid Family & Medical Leave- State Employees
 SB785 Unpaid Parental Leave - Definition of Employer

Long-Term Care and Aging

HB35 and SB212 Aging Services – Program Repeal and Consolidation
 HB933 Nursing Home - Cost Reports
 HB1142 and SB920 Maryland Interested Parties Advisory Group
 HB1478 Report - Directory of Home Health Care Providers

The Legislative Report on Women's Issues stands as a new tool to ensure that the progress made each legislative session is visible, measurable, and a foundation for the work still ahead.

Celebrating Women's Leadership: Honoring Maryland's Firsts



The Maryland Commission for Women celebrated trailblazing women by publishing a special Maryland Women's Hall of Fame and Young Women Leaders Awards booklet. This annual publication honors Maryland women and girls who break barriers, uplift their communities, and lead by example.

The biographies developed for this publication are also included in the State Archives "Maryland Women's Hall of Fame" website. The inductees are recognized with a museum quality display at Notre Dame of Maryland University.

Through this annual publication, the Maryland Commission for Women preserves the stories of remarkable Marylanders who shape the state's history and future, inspiring women and girls across generations to keep making their mark.

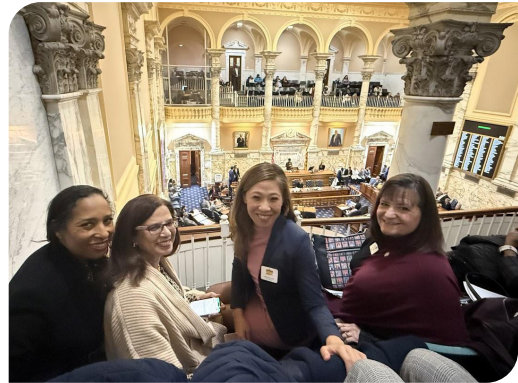
III. Legislative Advocacy

Commission Night in Annapolis

GOAL 4: Establish a more visible presence in Annapolis, including through conducting a February Annapolis Visit for Commissioners.

In February, Commissioners met in Annapolis during the legislative session. Our Annapolis night included:

- Welcoming remarks from Women's Caucus President Delegate Dana Jones and Health and Government Operations Committee Chair Joseline Peña-Melnik
- A briefing and discussion in the HGO conference room on the proposed OTC Birth Control Collaborative legislation
- Viewing and announcement during House and Senate floor sessions
- Post meeting social event



The Commissioners found this event rewarding and determined that our 2026 Commission Night in Annapolis will include an advocacy training and small group meetings with multiple legislators to support our legislative agenda.

Legislative Agenda

In 2025 the Commission decided to reform the process for developing and supporting its legislative agenda. We developed a system to track the introduction and progress of all legislation related to women. At the same time, we established a process for the Commission to support specific legislation.

GOAL 6: Develop a system for tracking legislation impacting women and share with organizational partners as appropriate.

GOAL 7: Develop a formal review process for legislation. Support and oppose legislation as necessary and in coalition wherever possible.

Legislative Tracking System

The Commission created a new bill tracker to help record and monitor the progress of legislation of interest throughout the session. This tool, developed and maintained by Camille Fabiyi as her internship project, made it possible for Commissioners and staff to keep up with bill introductions, hearings, amendments, votes, and final outcomes for every piece of legislation introduced throughout the session.

The tracker supports stronger engagement with partners, community members, and legislators by providing up-to-date information and helping the Commission respond quickly to developments. The Bill Tracker has become an important resource for staying organized and making sure the Commission's advocacy aligns with its legislative goals. This bill tracking system also served as a resource to support the development of the 2025 Legislative Session Report on Women's Issues.

Legislative Review Process

The Commission adopted a new process for determining which legislation to support in its legislative agenda. Commissioners and staff developed a form that stakeholders can submit to the Research, Policy and Legislation Committee to request support for legislation. This ensures that the Commission is well informed of the reasons women's rights advocates support a particular piece of legislation, as well as any obstacles or potential opposition. The form includes information on legislative history, the potential benefits of the policy change, and potential costs to the state or other stakeholders.

Our new legislative review process requires that a Commissioner be willing to champion any bill the Commission supports, and ensures the full Commission has the information necessary to weigh in on any particular piece of legislation. The process also establishes tiers of support, which allows the Commission to prioritize their time to focus potential impact where it can be most helpful.

Legislative Advocacy & Testimony

In 2025 the Commission supported 11 pieces of legislation in various ways. We submitted written testimony, delivered in-person testimony, and requested support for legislation from individual legislators. We also shared information about upcoming hearings and votes through our social media and email newsletter.

- Commissioner Judy Carbone testified in the Senate in support of SB848 - Public Health Abortion Grant Program on behalf of the Mountain Maryland Alliance for Reproductive Freedom. The MCW also submitted written testimony in support of this bill, which was sponsored by Senator Guy Guzonne and Delegate Lesley Lopez.



- Executive Director Ariana Kelly testified in the House and the Senate in support of HB 939 & SB674 the Maryland Commission for Women's Over-the-Counter Birth Control Collaborative, sponsored by Senator Shelly Hettleman and Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk.



- The Commission also supported two pieces of legislation related to the use of gender neutral language in the workforce. HB 580 & SB164 Terminology and Obsolete References-Maryland State Firefighters Association and Related Terms updates statutory language to use firefighters instead of firemen. This bill passed, but another bill that the Commission supported that did not come up for a vote was HB 1129 & SB733 Constitutional Officers - Gender-Neutral Language. This legislation would give voters the option to modernize Maryland's constitution to include gender neutral language for the constitutional officers.
- The Commission supported legislation HB 265 & SB456 Dental Services - Qualification for Maryland Dent-Care Program. This successful legislation will ensure part-time dentists and dental hygienists can participate in this public service loan repayment program. Part-time workers are overwhelmingly women, and 96% of dental hygienists are women.



2025 Outreach and Awards Committee Accomplishments

I. Strengthening Partnerships

GOAL 1: Strengthen partnerships with women’s rights advocacy organizations, state agencies, and local commissions through public speaking, communications, sponsorships, outreach, educational programs, and awards programs.

In FY25 the MCW significantly increased its communications, community outreach and education efforts. Commissioners and staff engaged in public speaking across the state, sponsored and attended dozens of events, and developed new communications tools used to share important information about women’s rights activities and events across the state. This work helped us maintain awareness of women’s rights activities across the state, effectively share this information, strengthen our clearinghouse role, and build an informed foundation for future research and policy activities.

Sponsorships & Event Attendance

The MCW supported events hosted by community partners in FY2025. These include the Women’s Law Center’s Night of the Advocate, MCASA’s Call to Action and Legislative Reception, Reproductive Justice Maryland’s High Tea, and the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence’s Annual Awards Ceremony. We also supported the Montgomery County Commission for Women’s Legislative Briefing and the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women’s Annual Conference.

Commissioners and staff also attended dozens of partner organization events across the state including the Associated Black Charities’ “The Cookout,” Planned Parenthood of Maryland’s legislative reception, and Executive Alliance’s “In the Room” Mentoring Event.



II. Outreach and Education

Maryland Commission for Women Public Speaking Program

MCW Commissioners and staff are regularly invited by community partners to speak on a wide variety of women's rights topics across the state. The Commission also worked with local and state government agencies and elected leaders to promote their work on women's rights initiatives. Multiple higher education institutions called on the Commission for Women to provide speakers on women in leadership and women's rights issues. In 2025, our public speaking program included 24 public speaking and educational events with community, educational, and state agency partners all across the state.

Commissioner Public Speaking Engagements:

Women Legislators of Maryland Retreat - In October, Commission Chair LaShaune Stitt and Executive Director Ariana Kelly spoke about the Commission's commitment to child care at the Women Legislators of Maryland retreat in Annapolis.



Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women - In November, Commission Chair LaShaune Stitt spoke about the future of the Commission for Women and its longstanding partnership with MLAW at the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women Conference "Celebrating 30 Years of Success" in Howard County. Commission staff also had an information table at this event.





Women's History Month - Indian Creek School's women's EMPOWERment club - President Sophia O'Connell '25 welcomed Commissioner Judith Kain Emmel to address the Upper School student body as a Women's History Month featured speaker.



International Women's Day - In March, Commissioner Tazeen Ahmad spoke as a panelist at the International Women's Day event at Frederick Community College. The event also featured Comptroller Brooke Lierman, Delegate Lily Qi, and other exciting women speakers.

National Women's Veteran's Day - In June, Commissioner Gloria Dent delivered the keynote address at the 2025 National Women Veterans' Day Entrepreneurship Conference. The conference offers resources for women veterans looking to start or grow their own businesses.

Commission Staff Public Education Speaking Engagements:



Reproductive Freedom on the Ballot in Maryland: Why It Matters

- In September, Executive Director Ariana Kelly joined Rabbi in Residence Abbi Sharofsky and JCRC Maryland Director of Government and Community Relations Deborah Miller to lead a webinar educating the community about the ballot question on enshrining the Right to Reproductive Freedom in the Maryland State Constitution. The discussion highlighted the policy's significance and explored reproductive freedom as a core Jewish value.

Daily Record Women's Leadership Summit

Summit - At this October event in Baltimore, Executive Director Ariana Kelly moderated the Legislative Update panel. The panel's discussion focused on recent Maryland legislation affecting women, as well as anticipated developments for 2025. They explored strategies for amplifying women's voices in the legislative process to drive meaningful change. Women's Caucus President Delegate Dana Jones, Maryland Women's Law Center Executive Director Katie Curran O'Malley, and Director of Government Affairs for the University of Maryland - Baltimore Jeannette Ortiz the discussed the 2024 Maryland Maternal Health Act, child care and other priorities for the Women Legislators of Maryland, and the future of reproductive rights.



Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence Conference - Also in October, Executive Director Ariana Kelly was the keynote speaker at this year's MNADV Annual Awards Ceremony in November, bringing together domestic violence service providers from across the state.



Friends of JCADA - Executive Director Kelly presented on a webinar entitled "Hear Our Stories: Partners on a Mission to End IPV"

Gender Justice Rally in Annapolis - In March, Executive Director Ariana Kelly spoke alongside Baltimore City Council Member Phylicia Porter at a rally in support of numerous Commission legislative priorities, sponsored by a coalition of women's groups and the office of Delegate Lesley Lopez.



Executive Alliance In the Room Mentoring Event - Executive Director Ariana Kelly served as a celebrity mentor, speaking on a panel with NaTasha Horton of Truist Bank and Melissa Greeson of Bolton.

Supporting Higher Education & Research



University of Maryland Women in Law Presentation - Executive Director Ariana Kelly served as a guest speaker in November for the University of Maryland's Empowering Women in Law student group.

George Washington University Milken School of Public Health - in February, Executive Director Ariana Kelly was the guest lecturer in the graduate school class on state reproductive health care policy, highlighting Maryland's leadership in this space.

Towson University Equal Pay Day Event - Executive Director Ariana Kelly spoke on "Pay Equity: the Sex Segregated Workforce, Caregiving and Financial Impacts Across a Lifetime" at Towson University's Equal Pay Day student conference in March.

Johns Hopkins Carey School of Business - Executive Director Ariana Kelly met with a group of graduate students to discuss parental leave policies in the State of Maryland. The May discussion focused on how the US lags behind other nations on these policies, and private sector mechanisms for change.

Partnerships with Local Governments, State Agencies and Public Officials

Montgomery County Government Resolution to Affirm Reproductive Freedom Event

- Executive Director Ariana Kelly spoke alongside County Executive Marc Elrich and County Council President Kate Stewart at an event announcing a resolution from Montgomery County Government in support of Question 1, the Reproductive Freedom Amendment.



Latin American Delegation Meeting with SiX and the Women's Equality Center - As part of the State Innovation Exchange's (SiX) transnational work, Executive Director Ariana Kelly joined Delegate Nicole Williams and the Women's Equality Center to speak with state legislators from Latin America about abortion and maternal health policies.



Women Legislators of Maryland Planning Meeting

- Commission Chair Dr. LaShaune Stitt and Executive Director Ariana Kelly presented to the women's caucus about the history of the Commission for Women during their strategic planning meeting in Annapolis, and again about legislative priorities at their virtual membership meeting in March.

Executive Director Ariana Kelly and Management Associate Genesis Franco joined Delegate Nicole Williams in Washington. Visiting Legislators: Mónica Silva Ruiz and Liliana Aguilar Gil (Mexico) Guadalupe Tagliaferri (Argentina).

Maryland 250 Commission Spring Meeting - Executive Director Ariana Kelly joined Commissioner Judi Emmel to present to the Commission on the work of the Maryland Commission for Women and the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame.

Campus Contraception Convening - In June, Executive Director Ariana Kelly and Program Manager Brett Jordan joined "Helping Maryland Colleges Expand OTC Contraception Access" at the University of Maryland - Baltimore County. The event brought together experts and campus representatives from across the state to provide support for universities and community colleges as they build out improved OTC contraceptive access on campuses. Featured in the photo: Robyn Elliott (Public Policy Partners), Ariana Kelly (Executive Director of MCW), Jakeya Johnson (Executive Director of RJM), and Emily Dow (Assistant Secretary of Academic Affairs, MHEC).



III. Building a Communications Network

Monthly Newsletter

In June 2024, the Commission for Women created a monthly newsletter designed to be a consistent, centralized source of information, fulfilling the Commission's mandate to act as a clearinghouse for women's issues work across Maryland. The Maryland Women's Monthly email newsletter shared 62 events or opportunities from 57 unique community partners over the year. It also highlighted important policy issues and information, events in the community, work being done by partner organizations and local Commissions for Women, and exciting news articles relevant to Maryland women. The newsletter was also used to share research, including the Maryland Family Network's Childcare Report and the Commission for Women's 2025 Women in Elected Office Report. MCW's email subscriptions have grown by 35% since the newsletter was established.



Social Media

The MCW developed an integrated social media presence in FY2025, including Twitter/X, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and BlueSky. Through this network, the MCW promoted 85 different partner organization events, including conferences, research and educational events such as the Maryland Women Moving Forward Conference, the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc. Baltimore Metropolitan Chapter Maryland Legislative Wrap Up, Maryland Latinos Unidos Maternal Health Care for Latinas Survey, Feminist Majority National Young Feminist Leadership Conference and so many more. The MCW created a "Maryland Women's Rights Starter Pack" for new BlueSky members to follow. It enables individuals to follow 85 different women political leaders and women's rights organizations with one click. On Instagram, we posted 182 stories and posts featuring the work of 49 different partner organizations.

We also used social media platforms to celebrate Black History Month and Women's History Month, with weekly profiles of important women in Maryland history shared across our platforms. Weekly profiles for Hispanic Heritage Month are planned for fall 2025.

The MCW's social media shared state agency publications and events related to women's issues with the women's rights community, including the Women Veterans' Day Entrepreneurship Conference, the Maryland Child Trafficking Awareness Conference, the Maryland Department of Labor Pay Equity Report, and the Maryland Comptroller's State Of The Economy Series: Child Care And The Economy, which focused on barriers to women's labor force participation.

IV. Working with Local Commissions

The Maryland Commission for Women works in close partnership with the 17 County and City Commissions for Women across the state.

GOAL 2: Ensure local Commissions are part of our work.

Supporting Local Commission Events - Commissioners and staff attended numerous local Commission events throughout the year, including Baltimore County's Women of the Year Awards and Montgomery County's *Women's Legislative Briefing*.



Strategic Planning Session for the Anne Arundel County Commission for Women - Former Program Manager Danelle Buchman joined the Anne Arundel County Commission for Women in January to speak about the statewide Commission and our work.

Frederick Commission for Women - Women's Issues Forum - County Commissioner Tawanda Bailey and Executive Director Ariana Kelly joined Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater and Congresswoman Katherine Clark at a women's issues forum in Frederick.



Promoting Local Initiatives

Our newsletter's "local spotlight" feature provided statewide attention to local Commissions work. The 2025 Legislative Session Report on Women's Issues also highlights local commissions legislative priorities. MCW's newsletter and social media promoted the events of local Commissions for Women, including the Wicomico County pink pantry opening, Frederick County International Women's Day event, Baltimore County Commission Women of the Year Awards and the Charles County Commission for Women Sister City Partnership Ceremony.

Identifying Policy Opportunities

The Maryland Commission for Women is partnering with county and local commissions to promote implementation of HB389/SB516, a new state law allowing local jurisdictions to reduce property taxes for home-based child care providers. After identifying child care affordability as a top priority, commissions were encouraged through outreach supported by Delegate Julie Palakovich Carr to inform their local governments about this opportunity and advocate for enacting the necessary local laws to expand these tax credits. This collaboration aims to lower costs for child care providers and improve access for families statewide.

Local Commission Chairs Meeting

On May 1, Commission Chair Dr. LaShaune Stitt, First Vice Chair Pat Lambert, and Second Vice Chair Christine Lee invited the Chairs of the 17 County/City Commissions for Women across Maryland to an informal meeting to discuss our common goals and make connections across the state. The Maryland Commission for Women is committed to providing an opportunity for County and City Commissions to identify common priorities and learn from each other. Several County Commissions are currently focusing on financial education and mentorship programs, while others are addressing caregiving and child care needs. Some provide scholarships and awards to help improve the people in their communities. All are committed to important work to empower women at the county and local levels.

- Baltimore City Commission for Women is planning a "State of the Womb" event about Black women's maternal health.
- Wicomico County Commission is opening a Pink Pantry for menstrual hygiene products in Salisbury.
- Anne Arundel County's "Journey to Success" program exposes students to different careers and is accepting volunteers.
- Calvert County maintains a clothing closet and supports resume writing and interview workshops for women.
- Garrett County recently conducted a survey of 200 women about the issues that impact them. The survey found 144 women prioritized affordable childcare as a pressing need.
- Frederick County Commission for Women is expanding their efforts through outreach to the ESL community and mentorship programs to support young women and girls.

- Allegany County While the Allegany County Commission for Women has been in their “rebuilding phase,” they have strengthened the community engagement through once a month events.
- Washington County Commission for Women is established as an Advisory Board to the County.

These are only some of the projects that Commissions for Women across the state have been working on. The Maryland Commission for Women is committed to continuing to work with County and Local Commissions in the years to come.

V. Awards and Recognition

Outreach and Awards Committee Goals 3, 4, 5 and 6 all relate to our March Women’s History Month Event at Government House. We set out to reform the Young Women Awards outreach process, increase Young Women Awards grant amounts to \$2,000 per awardee to have a more meaningful impact, and host an exceptional March Women’s History Month Event in Annapolis.

Young Women Leaders Awards

Assessment

The Maryland Commission for Women launched an award for young women in 1997. In Summer 2024, the MCW staff undertook an analysis of our Young Women Leaders Award to assess if the program was equitable, representative of the entire state, and aligned with our statutory mission.

We were pleased to determine that Black/African American and Asian American young women were well represented among our previous honorees. Young women from some rural counties were also well represented. However, we identified certain areas for improvement. Our analysis showed that certain counties, most notably Prince George’s and Baltimore Counties and mountain Maryland were underrepresented, while some smaller, more affluent suburban counties were overrepresented. We also found that only 6% of the honorees identified as Latina, while Maryland is 12% Latino.

Revamping

In response to our analysis, the Commission reformed our Young Women Awards criteria and outreach strategy. To ensure alignment with our statutory mission, we changed how we conduct outreach for nominations, and modernized our selection criteria. The Commission focused on identifying applicants with experience leading on women’s rights issues. We also engaged our partner organizations across the state for assistance in identifying nominees, with focused outreach in underrepresented areas. We also increased our grant award from \$500 to \$2,000 for each winner, to be used to advance their work or education. We received a record breaking 102 applications from young women working with dozens of different organizations in a variety of ways to empower women.

2025 Young Women Leaders Awardees

The 2025 Young Women Leaders Awards recognized the following four young women for their leadership in advancing women's rights in Maryland.



Zulema Delacruz Martinez is an advocate for first-generation college students from Caroline County. She has also worked to raise awareness about the treatment of Latina women in the workforce on Maryland's eastern shore. Zulema served as President of the Multicultural Student Union and founded the Hispanic/Latino Student Union at Chesapeake College before earning her Associate Degree and transferring to Towson University.

Favour Gam from Prince George's County aims to amplify Black feminist thought through literature. She received a grant from the Washington Women's Foundation Rock Star Fund to complete a book highlighting the lived experiences of young Black girls. Favour also serves as the historian for the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) University of Maryland chapter.

Kambria Kyle is an advocate for women in the military, who worked to break barriers in JROTC at Northern Garrett High School. To establish female leadership as not a rarity but the norm, Kambria committed to surpassing standards once deemed far too high for "the girls" by earning a place in leadership positions, such as JROTC Battalion Commander and Raider Captain. Kambria is also a fierce advocate for postpartum support for women and maternal mental health services. She has been accepted to the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Ta'mira Thomas draws on her compassion and resilience to advocate for young women in out-of-home (foster) care. Through her work with the Howard County Youth Advisory Board, Ta'mira advises policymakers at the local and state level about the needs of young women in out-of-home care. As President of the Board in 2022 and 2024, she led initiatives to support the houseless through hygiene bags, food supplies, and shelter resources. Passionate about women's health, she is currently pursuing a CNA certification and plans to become an obstetrician registered nurse.

Future Trailblazers Award Winners

We were overwhelmed by the quality of our applicants this year. For the first time in our history, the Commission chose an additional seven applicants as Future Trailblazers, to be honored with official state citations and an invitation to the Hall of Fame Awards event at the Governor's Mansion. They were overjoyed to have private mentorship time with First Lady Dawn Moore after the event.



Future Trailblazer Awardees

Gaargi Bora, *Howard County*

Camilla Chi, *Montgomery County*

Alianna Hines, *Prince George's County*

Malaya Mason, *Baltimore County*

Ryan Reed, *Prince George's County*

Daniela Renderos, *Montgomery County*

Anushka Tyagi, *Frederick County*



2025 Young Women Leaders Selection Committee

Gloria Dent, *Maryland Commission for Women*

Pier Blake, *Maryland Commission for Women*

Judy Carbone, *Maryland Commission for Women*

Joyce Roldan King, *Project Safe Childhood Prosecutor,
MSAA Special Victims Unit Chair*

Gabriela Lemus, *Latinos Unidos*

Angelique Salizan, *Maryland Department of Human Services*

LaShaune Stitt, *Maryland Commission for Women*

Maryland Women's Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony

In selecting the 2025 Maryland Women's Hall of Fame inductees, the Maryland Commission for Women built on its 2024 theme of honoring Maryland Women's Firsts. Four remarkable women were inducted for breaking barriers and paving the way for others as 'firsts' in their fields. These women were officially inducted into the Hall of Fame at an event hosted by Governor and Mrs. Moore at Government House during Women's History Month.

The Commission is revamping the nominations process for the 2026 Maryland Women's Hall of Fame inductions. We will work with our partners to identify women from throughout Maryland history across different fields who belong in the Hall of Fame.

2025 Maryland Women's Hall of Fame Inductees



Chief Donna Wolf Mother Abbott is the first woman chief of the Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians and the first woman chief known in Maryland state history. While under her leadership, the tribe continues to have the most successful Native American festivals in tribal history, and there has been much progress made in renovating the tribe's two churches.



Delegate Maggie McIntosh is a woman of many firsts. She was the first woman to serve as Maryland's House Majority Leader and the first woman to serve as Appropriations Committee Chair. She was also the first out LGBTQ member of the Maryland General Assembly of any gender. Maggie represented Baltimore City in the Maryland House of Delegates from 1992-2023.



Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnik is the first Latina to chair a Committee in the Maryland General Assembly. She has built a career dedicated to justice, healthcare access, and equity. She is the highest-ranking Latina in the Maryland General Assembly and has passed over 100 bills into law, many of them the first of their kind in the nation.



The Honorable Kathleen Kennedy Townsend is Maryland's first female Lieutenant Governor. She spearheaded initiatives such as the Hot Spots crime reduction program, launched Character Education in public schools, initiated microfinance lending, and mandated domestic violence training for state employees. She chaired the Governor's Office of Workforce Development, the Governor's Office of Children, Youth and Families, and the Task Force on Drug Treatment.



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