

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR MARYLAND WOMEN

2002 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA ISSUES

CHILDREN'S SAFETY

Crimes-Sex Offenses-Person in Position of Authority (Position of Authority)
The Attorney General issued an opinion that there is a gap in the law intended to protect children from sexual exploitation. Current sex offense laws allow for children as young as 14 to engage in sexual activity with adults as long as it is considered "consensual". Child abuse laws only cover family and household members, caregivers and teachers (as long as the activity takes place on school grounds). However, adults in "a position of trust or authority" can leverage significant influence over the child to participate in sexual activity. According to the *American Center for the Prosecution of Child Abuse*, Maryland is one of only 4 states that does not have a law addressing abuse by a person in a Position of Authority.

Transportation-School Vehicles-Safety Standards
This initiative would limit the use of vans by professional transportation companies to transport children to school. The reason is that vans have been proven to be an unsafe method of transportation.

CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Repeal of the Statute that Allows Polygraph Testing of Victims of Rape.
In Maryland, the **only victim** who is required by law to take a polygraph test to prove that a crime has actually occurred is a **rape victim**. While law enforcement agents say the statute is only used occasionally, victims report regular use of the test in many jurisdictions. This initiative would repeal the Maryland statute that allows polygraph testing of victims of rape.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & SEXUAL ASSAULT

Domestic Violence-Protection Orders-Expansion of District Court Commissioners

This initiative would provide legislation that would expand the powers of court commissioners to enable them to issue interim domestic violence orders during times when courts are not in session (such as evenings, weekends, or holidays). Informally called the "24/7 access bill", this change will require the passage of both enabling legislation and a constitutional amendment in the 2002 Maryland General Assembly and, if successful, would appear on the 2002 ballot for voter approval. This legislation would make a tremendous difference for many Marylanders, providing additional safety and protection during a period of heightened danger.

ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Paid Family Leave
The Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA") provides that employees can take up to 12 weeks of leave at the birth or adoption of a child. The FMLA does not provide for any form of income during the leave period. The proposed Maryland legislative initiatives would provide that employees who take leave at the birth or adoption of a child either under the FMLA's provisions (which apply only to those employers who have 50 or more employees), or because their employer grants them leave on its own initiative, be

allowed access to unemployment insurance (u.i.) during their leave once they have exhausted any paid leave to which they may be entitled. Note that in the alternative, advocates propose that the legislation require that short-term disability insurance coverage be provided to allow for income during the parental leave period.

EDUCATION

Thornton Commission Recommendation for Education Funding Based on Adequacy Studies

Every child in Maryland should have all of the facilities/resources so each child should be able to succeed. This would include adequacy of instruction. There have been 52 "successful" schools identified. One of the factors that made these schools successful was parental involvement. What is necessary to provide an adequate education for everyone in Maryland? It would require \$2.2 billion. This initiative would provide the basis for building adequate school systems across the state's school districts.

OTHER

Election Laws-Clean Money Campaign

This initiative would create a blue-ribbon task force to study and issue recommendations before the next legislative session to the Governor and General Assembly on the merits of establishing a system of public financing for candidates of the Maryland General Assembly. It would provide an avenue whereby candidates might receive public campaign financing by meeting certain qualifications. Thus providing opportunity for more people, particularly women, to seek elective office.