

**Voices of Maryland Women Listening Tour  
Upper and Mid-Eastern Shore**

Chesapeake College – Caroline Center  
100 College Circle  
Wye Mills, Maryland 21679  
October 24, 2017 ♦ 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

The Voices of Maryland Women Listening Tour traveled to Chesapeake College in Wye Mills, the heart of Maryland's Eastern Shore. There, thirty-four individuals gathered to discuss the concerns of women in this region. The public forum was organized as a partnership between the State Senator Addie Eckardt and the Maryland Commission for Women.

The attendees at the forum included individuals, representatives of women's and community organizations, service providers and public officials including the Mayor of Cambridge Victoria Jackson-Stanley and State's Attorney for Talbot County, Mr. Scott G. Patterson. Representatives of both U.S. Senator Cardin and Van Hollen were also in attendance. The participants articulately identified a wide range of issues and challenges for the women of this region which includes Kent, Caroline, Queen Anne's, Talbot and Dorchester Counties that encompasses small, historic cities and towns, popular resort and tourist attractions, along with large agricultural and seafood industry areas.

The evening began with welcoming remarks by Senator Eckardt who noted that currently there are no active county Commissions for Women in the Upper or Mid-Shore area, unlike other counties on the western side of the bay. She and the participants agreed that one outcome of this program might be to consider how Commissions for Women could be established in this region to focus on the issues addressed at the forum. The event then opened into a discussion of the challenges facing women on the Eastern Shore. The participants listed a total of 35 challenges and each participant was given five "votes" to place beside the issues she or he considered most important. From that process, five were selected as the top priorities. The group identified actions that could be taken to address each of the "top five" issues:

1. Lack of Public Transportation
  - a. Reevaluate transportation funding
  - b. Build more flexibility into the system: take advantage of technology to create an efficient on-demand public transportation
  - c. Develop new models of public transportation that work in rural areas rather than employing models based on urban needs.
2. Threats to Affordable Health Care
  - a. Maintain affordable health care for Marylanders
  - b. Develop incentives for provider training to increase the number of health care professionals in the region
  - c. Develop career ladders within the health care professions so that employees can advance from entry level to higher positions through experience and training

3. Mental Health /Addictions: Drugs, Alcohol and Gambling
  - a. Establish prevention programs through education
  - b. Reevaluate sentencing guidelines for offenders
  - c. Provide more and better mental health care services
  - d. Expand rehab services for pregnant women and affected newborns and for women with children
  - e. Establish recovery centers using the Oxford House model of self-run, self-supported recovery houses
  - f. Establish programs in the community modeled on the TAMAR (trauma, addictions, mental health and recovery) program for women in corrections facilities in Maryland
  
4. Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Harassment
  - a. Offer programs that teach healthy and safe relationships, starting in elementary school
  - b. Establish more shelters and transitional housing for victims
  - c. Provide peer-support programs for victims in the court system
  - d. Redefine domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment as a men's issue – not just a women's issue: discuss the number of perpetrators, not just the number of victims
  
5. Special Challenges for Immigrant Women
  - a. Provide access to qualified, legitimate legal services, targeted "pop-up" legal clinics in the community
  - b. Encourage the community to embrace its diversity and provide peer support, family to family
  - c. Provide cultural sensitivity and responsiveness training to service providers and law enforcement

The chart on the next page lists all the issues identified during the course of the public forum and shows the number of votes each one received from those in attendance as they considered the priority level of each issue in comparison to the others.

<b>Number of Votes</b>	<b>Issue</b>
17	Lack of public transportation
16	Threats to affordable health care
13	Addictions: drugs, alcohol and gambling
10	Domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment
9	Special challenges for immigrant women
8	Need to provide quality education that prepares students for good jobs
7	Inadequate and inconsistent access to Internet and cell phone service
5	Student loan debt
5	Frail elderly women, need resources to plan for end of life phase
5	Too few women in elected and appointed office
4	Lack of drivers' education in the public schools
4	Need to teach young people about healthy, respectful relationships
3	Affordable, quality child care, including emergency care
3	Access to reproductive health care
3	Bullying in schools
3	Access to information about existing resources
2	Need to provide sex education in the public schools
2	Single mothers and poverty
2	Affordable, quality housing
2	Financial literacy
1	Too few jobs that pay a living wage
1	Lack of substance abuse treatment for pregnant women and substance affected newborns
1	Food deserts: areas with too few places to buy groceries
1	Need for job and career-readiness training
1	Human trafficking - need services and resources for victims
1	Foster children aging out of care - need for transitional services and housing
1	Need to build coalitions to advocate for women's issues in the legislature
1	Homelessness, especially for mothers with children
1	Need for support services for young families
1	Access to affordable legal services
1	Grandparents raising children
0	Need for nutrition education
0	Women veterans – need for gender-sensitive services
0	Isolation and fragmentation of a rural community
0	Teen pregnancy
134	35 Issues Presented

October 24, 2017

# Upper and Mid-Shore: Voices of Maryland Women

## Photo Album









