

**Voices of Maryland Women Listening Tour  
Garrett County**

Ace's Run Restaurant – SpitzMark Room  
September 20, 2016, 4:00 - 6:30 p.m.

More than thirty individuals participated in the Garrett County session of the Voices of Maryland Women Listening Tour. The event was organized as a partnership of the Garrett County Commission for Women and the Maryland Commission for Women.

The attendees at the forum included individuals, representatives of women's and community advocacy organizations and service providers. Included among the participants were the Garrett County State's Attorney and a representative of U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski. They passionately identified a wide range of issues and challenges for the women of Garrett County, selected five they thought were most important, and discussed possible remedies. Overriding the entire forum was the sense of isolation the participants feel from the rest of the state, due in part to the physical distance from Maryland's more populated areas, and technological issues including lack of connectivity for both cell phones and internet. They expressed deep gratitude that the state Commission for Women had come across the mountains to their county to hear what they had to say. And they had plenty to say.

To set the concerns raised at this forum in context, the attendees repeatedly referenced the small population of their county - Garrett County has a population of just under 30,000 - and its relative lack of diversity, especially compared to the rest of the state. According to SurbanStats.org, the population of Garrett County is 97% white. In addition they repeatedly described how the effects of poverty are compounded in a sparsely populated, rural, mountainous area.

The participants listed a total of 22 challenges facing the women of Garrett County. Each participant was given five "votes" to place beside the issues they thought were most important. From that process, five were selected as the top priorities. Because the problems of poverty seem so intertwined with all the other issues developed, it was added as an overarching concern, and combined the votes on several other issues. The group then identified actions that could be taken to address the six issues:

1. Poverty, especially for single mothers
  - a. Economic development that focuses on jobs with living wages, benefits and retirement plans
  - b. Policies that encourage students to stay in school
  - c. Education and training for the good jobs available in Garrett County
  - d. Teaching girls self esteem and helping them envision a brighter future that includes staying in school and preparing for self-sufficiency

2. Inadequate public transportation
  - a. Encourage public-private partnerships to provide public transportation
  - b. Require the public schools to provide drivers education to make it easier for residents to earn drivers licenses.
  
3. Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
  - a. Increase funding for services
  - b. Provide funding for long-term care
  - c. Develop transitional housing
  - d. Fund specialized training for service providers to include dual needs of victims of both trauma and addictions
  
4. Need for More Women in Leadership positions
  - a. Develop programs the encourage women to be politically engaged
  - b. Offer leadership training for girls in schools
  
5. Need for Economic Development that focuses on jobs that lead to careers with benefits and retirement plans
  - a. Encourage schools and college to provide training specific to the careers that are available here
  - b. Encourage more community involvement in economic development planning
  - c. Encourage community members to shop locally, support local businesses
  
6. Addiction, especially Opiod Addictions
  - a. Increase the availability of treatment services, including inpatient treatment programs
  - b. Enact legislation and regulations that restrict prescribing and dispensing addictive medications
  - c. Develop better ways of disposing of unused drugs

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>
28	Poverty, especially for single mothers and older women
25	Transportation, especially for people of low income
16	Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
16	Need for women in leadership positions and to be politically engaged
15	Economic Development that provides jobs with a living wage, a career path, benefits and retirement plans
11	Addictions
6	Inadequate child care resources
6	Needs of Older Women, especially those of low income
6	Inadequate access to technology including high-speed internet and cell phone service
5	Negative attitudes toward family planning
4	Need for services to build self esteem for women, especially single mothers
4	Sex bias in schools steers girls towards low wage jobs
4	Extreme difficulty obtaining drivers licenses and official i.d.
2	Housing – near monopoly on rental unit management
1	Lack of diversity
1	Large number of high school dropouts
0	Unequal Pay
0	Access for the persons with disabilities
0	Unequal access to jobs with a living wage
0	Shortage of mental health practitioners
0	Need for more women entrepreneurs
0	Small population
150	Total Votes – 22 Issues

September, 2016

# Garrett County: Voices of Maryland Women

Photo Album







