

**Voices of Maryland Women Listening Tour**  
**Montgomery County**  
Silver Spring Civic Building, Silver Spring, Maryland  
April 18, 2017, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Hosted by the Montgomery County Commission for Women, the Voices of Maryland Women Listening Tour traveled to downtown Silver Spring where 45 people gathered to talk to the Maryland Commission for Women about the concerns of women and girls in their community.

The evening began with welcoming remarks by Lorna Forde, President of the Montgomery County Commission for Women, followed by Senators Susan Lee and William Smith who reviewed legislation of specific concern to women that had been brought before the 2017 Maryland General Assembly. Then the discussion turned to the challenges facing women in this Capital Region county.

The attendees at the forum included individuals and representatives of women's and community advocacy organizations. They identified a wide range of issues and challenges for the women of Montgomery County, selected those they thought were most important, and discussed possible remedies.

The attendees listed a total of 26 challenges facing the women of Montgomery County. All participants were given five "votes" to place beside the issues they thought were most important. At first count, three issues emerged with the most votes, and then four were tied for third place. The participants then voted on just those four to identify the next two on their list. From that process, five issues were identified as top priorities. The group then discussed actions that could be taken to address those top five issues:

- 1. Guns in the hands of domestic violence perpetrators**
  - a. Enforce existing laws
  - b. Enact legislation to clarify and require enforcement
  - c. Coordinate law enforcement data bases
  
- 2. Lack of affordable, quality child care and a living wage for child care workers**
  - a. Establish school-age child care programs with schedules consistent with "normal" work schedules (not closing for spring break, snow days or professional days, for example)
  - b. Increase minimum wage to a living wage
  - c. Reverse the executive order that shortened the school year

- 3. Need for trauma-informed mental health services in schools**
  - a. Increase the number of guidance counselors
  - b. Provide scholarships for teachers for graduate degrees in Counseling
  - c. Provide scholarships to train multilingual counselors
  - d. Increase professional development for counselors
  - e. Require trauma and mental health training/continuing education for faculty
  - f. Provide vouchers for mental health services outside of the school system
  
- 4. Terminating the parental rights of rapists, when a child is conceived as a result of sexual assault**
  - a. Pass the legislation
  
- 5. Too little focus on women's mental health research**
  - a. Provide better funding
  - b. Institute a campaign to raise awareness

During the discussion of recommendations to address these issues, it became clear that the participants were in agreement on two recommendations that cut across all five issues:

- **Institute a campaign to ask all public officials as they make decisions, how those decisions will affect women.**
  - Will the decision improve women's lives?
  - Will it increase safety for women?
  - Will it improve women's physical and mental health?
  - Will it improve women's economic health?
  
- **Elect more women to public office**

The session was closed by Dr. Beatrice Lauman, First Vice President of the Montgomery County Commission for Women, who summed up the highlights of the discussion and thanked everyone who participated.

The chart on the next page lists all the issues that were identified during the course of this 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>
16	Guns in the hands of domestic violence perpetrators
15	Lack of affordable, quality child care and a living wage for child care workers
13	Need for trauma-informed mental health services in schools
12	Terminating the parental rights of rapists, when a child is conceived as a result of sexual assault
11	Too little focus on women's mental health research
10	Need for funding for pro bono legal representation in divorce, custody and domestic violence cases
9	Intergenerational poverty: low-income women need training in wealth creation
6	Trauma-informed training for judges who handle domestic violence cases
6	Need for supervised child visitation and exchange for families where domestic violence is an issue
6	Need for workforce development for front-line low-wage workers, especially in schools and hospitals, available during the work day
5	Better protections against violence against girls in schools
5	Ending school suspensions for young children
5	Senior women's issues: smaller pensions and social security benefits, more isolation and economic insecurity and are more vulnerable to exploitation, and are often burdened simultaneously with child care and elder care responsibilities
4	Income eligibility levels for Income Assistance and Food Stamps are too low
4	Burdensome traffic violation fees
3	Endangered funding for reproductive health services
3	Safety for undocumented women seeking protection from domestic violence
3	Protections for workers regarding equal pay
2	Paid family and medical leave
2	Bullying in schools
2	Human trafficking
1	Focus on medical research on women's health issues
1	Need for domestic violence awareness and response training in the workplace
1	Protection for victims of domestic violence
0	Earned Paid Sick Leave (Bill just passed)
145	25 Issues

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# Montgomery County: Voices of Maryland Women

Photo Album

















