



## **Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women 2020 Annual Report**

### ***Commissioners***

**Tina Games, *Chair* (Harwich)**  
**Joan Walsh-Freedman, *Vice Chair* (South Yarmouth)**  
**Linda Cebula, *Treasurer* (Harwich Port)**  
**Anna Noble Dunphy, *Secretary* (Falmouth)**  
**Helen Bresnahan, *Emerita* (Bourne)**

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**Katia Dacunha (Hyannis)**  
**Lisa Malcolm (Osterville)**  
**Lisa McNeill (Yarmouth Port)**  
**Lynda wan-N'Tani (Harwich)**

**Natalia Frois (Hyannis) – \*appointed January 2020**  
**Mary Reardon Johnson (South Yarmouth) – \*appointed January 2020**  
**Mary Waygan (Mashpee) – \*appointed January 2020**  
**Tara Wallace (Hyannis) – \*appointed January 2020**

**Tracy Johnson (Brewster) – \*completed term December 2019**  
**Melissa Murphy (Nantucket) – \*completed term December 2019**  
**Laura Innis (Hatchville) – \*resigned December 2019**

## **PURPOSE**

The *Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women* was enacted by law and established in 2009 to advance women toward full equity in all areas of life and to promote rights and opportunities for all women.

The Commission is comprised of thirteen appointed women who have had prior experience working toward the improvement of the status of women. Commissioners are drawn from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, sexual orientation, and socio-economic backgrounds from throughout Cape Cod and the Islands.

The Commission is empowered to:

- Study, review, and report on the status of women on the Cape and Islands
- Inform leaders of business, education, health care, state and local governments and the communications media of issues pertaining to women
- Serve as a clearinghouse for information on issues pertaining to women
- Identify and recommend qualified women for appointive positions at all levels of government, including boards and commissions
- Promote and facilitate collaboration among local women's commissions and among women's organizations in the state.

The commission meets ten times each year. It is expected that commissioners attend as many meetings as possible with absences over three requiring a conversation about cause. Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month from September through June from 5:00-7:00 pm.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the *Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women* is to provide a permanent, effective voice for women across Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the full enjoyment of life for all women throughout their lives.

## **GOALS FOR 2019-2020**

The Cape and Islands Commission moved into year two of the strategic plan (created in October 2018) which focused on two key issues that surfaced from the 2017 regional survey and the 2017-18 public hearings - *healthcare and housing*.

It was agreed that our three main workgroups would continue with their respective charges: (1) Hear more voices/reach more women; (2) Advocate for legislative issues; (3) Increased CCICSW visibility

The Commission agreed on the goals as listed below:

*Hearing More Voices/Reaching More Women:*

- Conduct one public hearing in November 2019
- Host a spring listening circle on Nantucket
- Compile testimony and discussion for reporting purposes

*Advocate for Legislative Issues:*

- Determine the state legislations related to housing and healthcare
- Follow implementation of legislation
- Explore actions at both state and local levels
- Keep CCICSW updated on legislative activity
- Attend MCSW Advocacy Day and meet with Cape and Islands legislators

*Increase Visibility:*

- Create and maintain CCICSW publicity/media list
- Send out media releases and flyers for public hearing and listening circle
- Send public hearing and listening circle reports to Cape and Islands legislators
- Maintain CCICSW Facebook page and explore other social media opportunities
- Research and update CCICSW website
- Follow through with training opportunities at Cape Cod Media Center

## **MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

The membership ad-hoc committee - which consisted of Joan Freedman, Anna Dunphy, Lynda wan-N'Tani, and Helen Bresnahan (emerita) - worked together to interview applicants to fill four vacancies. Four new Commissioners were appointed – Natalia Frois, Mary Reardon Johnson, Tara Wallace, Mary Waygan (all of whom began their terms in January 2020). Each new Commissioner was assigned to a current Commissioner for individual orientation and mentoring.

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

*Ending Balance in treasury - June 30, 2019*

Held in trust by State Commission: \$300.00

Remainder of first MCSW grant: \$369.58

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Total funds available: \$669.58

Ending balance in treasury - June 30, 2020

Held in trust by State Commission: \$300.00

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Total funds available: \$300.00

Subsequent to June 30, 2019 we were disappointed to learn that the remaining funds from the original grant were returned to the Commonwealth as being unspent by June 30, 2019 and therefore we were unable to have any of those funds available for our commission's use. We were not aware that this grant needed to be spent in a certain timeframe. We were also disappointed to see that the funds could only be used as applied for in the application- if our situation changed, we could not rearrange lines or spend on something else even if the expense continued the mission.

We have applied for \$700.00 in funding this Spring, but due to the COVID19 situation, we do not expect to see any of those funds made available.

The recent applications, by quarter, have allotted the same amount of funds for each regional commission. We request that the State Commission consider that not all regional commissions are the same. The Cape & Islands Commission is exactly that - the 15 towns on the Cape as well as the two islands, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. We have not been able to maintain representation from the islands because of the travel issue. It is costly for a commissioner to pay out of pocket for the ferry trips in order to attend monthly meetings. While our regional commission does allow for a few remote participations, not having the person physically present creates difficulties in the communication/discussion process. Asking a person to fund this expense effectively means that only a person of some means will be able to serve-this completely eliminates the very women that the Commission is attempting to serve and does not allow for diversity of commissioner membership. We would think that this same issue would hold true for state level commissioners who live west of Worcester-driving 150 miles to Boston and the tolls becomes expensive.

Additionally, it would make sense for the Cape commissioners to travel to the islands for both meetings and our listening circles and public hearings. Again, the costs become prohibitive and therefore we are not adequately serving our constituents.

While we recognize that the application for funds could be used to offset some of these travel issues, it leaves no funding for things like ink cartridges (at \$50 per) or for refreshments for our listening circles and public hearings. We are working on being able to record our public meetings in order to broadcast and thereby reach more women but there is a cost to this- it is not free. The State agency and the Commonwealth cannot expect the volunteer commissioners to continue to fund the expenses of the mission.

## **WORKING GROUP SUMMARIES**

### ***Legislative***

The *Legislative* working group spent the year following bills that pertained to the legislative priorities set by MCSW, as well as bills that directly affect women and girls on Cape Cod and the Islands, especially those related to healthcare and housing (which were the top two concerns that came from our 2017 survey and 2018 hearings). The workgroup recommended seven bills for consideration by CCICSW (listed below) which were discussed at our March 2020 meeting and ranked in order of preference. The three bills in bold were approved as priority legislation.

CCICSW was represented at Advocacy Day (held virtually this year) by the following Commissioners: Tina Games, Natalia Frois, Tara Wallace, Mary Johnson – with Commissioner Anna Dunphy providing the CCICSW update at the regional convening/community meeting and Commissioners Lisa McNeill and Tara Wallace joining her for the listening/discussion segment.

The *Legislative* workgroup consisted of six Commissioners – Linda Cebula, Anna Dunphy, Lynda wan-N'Tani, Mary Waygan, Tara Wallace, Mary Reardon Johnson (the latter three joining the workgroup after being appointed in January).

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### **Legislative Workgroup Recommendations for Full Commission Consideration** *(Bills in bold were approved as priority legislation at the 3/11/20 meeting)*

#### **1. S.1209 An Act to remove obstacles and expand abortion access (The ROE Act)**

“The Commonwealth shall not restrict the use of medically appropriate methods of abortion or the manner in which the medically appropriate abortion is provided”

*The ROE Act is currently in the Joint Committee of the Judiciary; deadline to report out is May 12, 2020.*

#### **2. H.910/S.2519 An Act addressing barriers to care for mental health (The ABC Act)**

Mental Health parity recognizes that insurance coverage for mental health conditions and substance abuse disorders must be the same as coverage for physical health problems. This bill would create more equitable access to behavioral health care by: improving enforcement through carrier self-reporting, address barriers created by time-consuming approval process, applying Parity across payers, and ensuring consistent application of medical necessity criteria.

*Passed unanimously by the Massachusetts Senate on 2/14/2020.*

### **3. (H.1264) Rental Arrearage Program**

Legislation to re-establish an upstream statewide rental arrearage program to help households avoid homelessness by providing back rental assistance and mortgage payments. (Co-Sponsors- Vieira, Fernandez, Hunt, Crocker) Sponsor: REP. MARJORIE DECKER

### **4. S.2310 An Act regulating the use of credit reports by employers**

A person shall not use a consumer report in connection with or as a criterion for employment purposes, request or procure a consumer report for employment purposes, or require an applicant to answer a question about the contents of a consumer report or the information contained in it regarding credit worthiness, credit standing or credit capacity. Note that there are exceptions for financial institution exempt executives/management, person signing checks, as required by other sections of federal or state laws, national security.....

### **5. H.909/S.590 An Act to require health care coverage for emergency psychiatric services**

Health care plans, whether private or state public plans, must provide for medically necessary services on a non-discriminatory basis.

### **6. (H.1288 & S.775) Housing Production Legislation**

Sponsors: REPS. KEVIN HONAN, ANDY VARGAS & SEN. JOSEPH BONCORE This legislation uses the Governor's Housing Choice bill as a foundation and includes additional provisions to create more housing, reduce barriers to production, and set affordable housing production goals. Building on Governor Baker's goal of producing 135,000 units by 2025, the bill increases that goal (427,000 by 2040) and sets an affordable housing goal for 20% of that new housing to be affordable, with 10% dedicated to Extremely Low-Income households. Lastly, the bill gives a court power to require abutters to post a bond before challenging a new development. This legislation includes:

Multifamily zoning requirement for cities and towns served by public transit Also filed as a separate bill - H.1231, sponsored by Rep. Christine Barber

Abutter appeals reform to discourage frivolous lawsuits to stop development Also filed as a separate bill - H.3397 & S.903, sponsored by Rep. Joseph McGonagle & Sen. Julian Cyr

Setting a statewide affordable housing production goal Also filed as a separate bill – H.1318, sponsored by Rep. Dave Rogers

### **7. (H.1305 & S.797) Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)**

Sponsors: REP. ADRIAN MADARO & SEN. JAMIE ELDRIDGE Legislation would codify and make programmatic improvements to the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), including raising the fair market rent standard for rental vouchers, increasing administrative fees, requiring inspections, and improving data collection.

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## ***Visibility***

The *Visibility* work group consisted of five Commissioners – Joan Freedman, Tina Games, Laura Innis, Tara Wallace, Natalia Frois, and Helen Bresnahan (emerita) – who spent the year following up on various opportunities that related to keeping the work of the Commission in the public eye.

An introductory letter was written and sent to all state legislators, accompanying the November Public Hearing report. Media releases were also sent prior to the hearing, resulting in two interviews - one with Cape Cod Media (on camera) and the other for Cape Cod Times. The workgroup also provided a broad distribution of the hearing flyer.

In addition to promoting the public hearing, the *Visibility* work group maintained the CCICSW Facebook page, posting articles and updates that pertained to the work of our Commission. Two other social media platforms were explored, Instagram and Twitter - with a goal of launching CCICSW pages during the latter half of 2020. The workgroup also researched the status of the currently defunct CCICSW website with the intention to update it later in the year.

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## ***Hearing More Voices/Reaching More Women***

The *Hearing More Voices* working group consisted of six Commissioners – Lisa McNeill, Lisa Malcolm, Katia Dacunha, Tracy Johnson, Natalia Frois, Melissa Murphy.

The role of the *Hearing More Voices/Reaching More Women* working group is to plan and implement programs, as outlined in the CCICSW Action Plan, which will allow CCICSW to meet more women and to hear and record their challenges, needs, and thoughts in order to support our mission of being a permanent and effective voice for women on Cape Cod and the Islands. Currently, this includes planning and holding Public Hearings and regional Listening Circles, working with the Visibility WG to promote the events, and reporting on the events.

The Hearing More Voices/Reaching More Women Working Group of CCICSW planned and held a Public Hearing in early November 2019 (report attached). The Working Group was also intending to hold a targeted Listening Circle in Fall 2019 but was required to take a break during the summer due to internal Commission workings. The Working Group and the full Commission agreed that it was best to focus on the Public Hearing rather than spread resources thin.

In late 2019, we started planning for a Listening Circle to be held on Nantucket in Spring 2020, and we were pleased to be working with one of our former Commissioners from Nantucket, Melissa Murphy, on the planning. Unfortunately, the current COVID-19 situation required us to cancel our May 2nd Listening Circle. We intend to hold the Listening Circle on Nantucket in the fall of 2020. In the meantime, we are looking at other virtual options for holding an online discussion and/or updating our previous CCICSW survey in order to hear from more women during this critical time.

*\*Attached is the 2019 Public Hearing Summary*