

# Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women

## Annual Report Fiscal Year 2021

Charles F. Hurley Building  
19 Staniford Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02114



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## Remarks from the 2020-2021 Chairwoman



On behalf of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, I am pleased to present our FY 2021 Annual Report. While the past year has presented various

challenges, the Commission rose to the occasion in responding to the needs of the Commonwealth. Our approach shifted to adapt to the concerns of Massachusetts residents and public health and economic needs, and examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, girls, and families. In place of our typical general open meetings, the MCSW launched hearings that focused on demographics most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic due to enduring social and structural issues. This outreach and research work built on our April 2020 Report on the Impact of COVID-19: and Related Policy on Massachusetts Women and Girls. In the programmatic year 2021, our efforts began with a hearing and report on Childcare and Education During COVID-19. Following this was a hearing and report on the Impact of COVID-19 on the Status of Women of Color. Finally, the MCSW launched our second annual Girls Initiative. Through our research, the Commission was able to engage with more than 8,000 women and girls from across the Commonwealth. With this important feedback, the Commission was able to advocate for important policies that would address the racial, gender, and economic burdens that impede upon the social, physical, and economic wellbeing of women in the commonwealth. The Commission is ever grateful to our partners and colleagues, including the members of state administration and the legislature, who collaborated with us during this challenging time in order to listen to the voices of women and advocate for legislation that uplifts our voices. We look forward to expanding our research and efforts in line with our mission to advance the status of women and girls in Massachusetts.

Denella Clark, MCSW 2020-2021 Chairwoman

### Commissioners

Denella Clark, Chair, Hyde Park  
Rebecca Bact, Vice-Chair, Auburndale  
Marlene Sallo, Clerk, Marina Bay  
Sara Schnorr, Treasurer, Holliston  
Penny Blaisdell, Marblehead  
Ruth Branson, Boston  
Marianna Fleckner, Westford  
Jean Cotter Fox, Chair, Program and Planning Committee, Freetown  
Liz Friedman, Northampton  
Sara Glenn-Smith, Holliston  
Allison Goldberg, Marblehead  
Audrey Hall, Chair, Budget and Personnel Committee, Chair, COVID-19 Action Task Force, Framingham  
Patricia Hohl, Framingham  
Leslie-Ann McGee, Kingston  
Christine Monska, Auburndale  
Wendy Silver, Needham  
Phyllis Smith, Framingham  
Shaitia Spruell, Chair, Legislative and Public Policy Committee, Clinton  
Mary-dith Tuitt, Boston

### Staff

Jill Ashton, Executive Director  
Sasha Heggie-Jackson, Program Director  
Mel Soto, Communications and Events Coordinator

### Interns

Carolyn Hoffman, Emerson Johnston, Agnes Nkansah, Sydney Weekes, Anna Draggunas, Soha Habib, Emma Garrison, Camille Cummings, Ji-Won Ha, Megan Paul, Riya Misra, Jhilmil, Hannah Orbach-Mandel, Maggie Linzy, Renee Remsberg, Leela de Paula, Audrey Kim, Emma Vejcik, Nawal Khan, Alison Manca

# Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women

## Annual Report Fiscal Year 2021

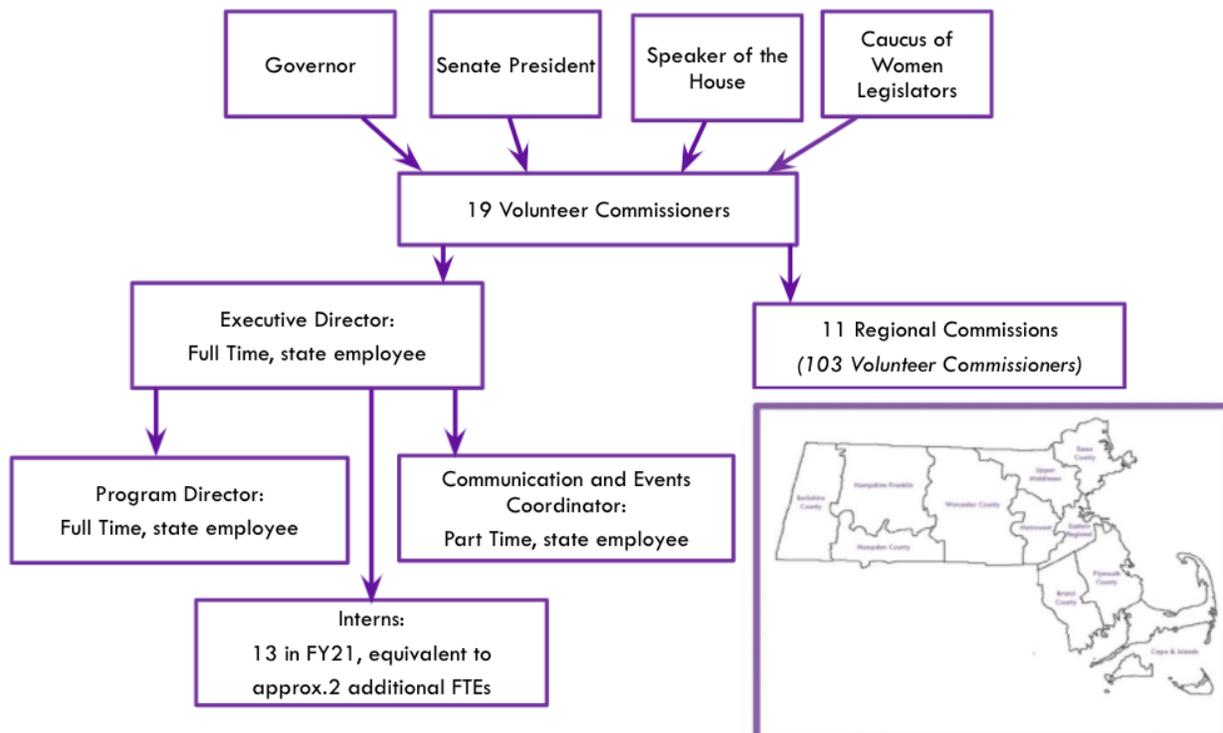
### **Legislative Charges**

Under MA Chapter 3, Section 66 of the Massachusetts General Laws, the MCSW is empowered to:

- Study, review, and report on the status of women in the commonwealth
- Advise executive and legislative bodies on the effect of proposed legislation on women
- Refer and act as a liaison by providing information on issues related to women
- Identify and recommend qualified women for positions at all levels of government
- Promote and facilitate collaboration among local women's commissions and among women's organizations in Massachusetts
- Serve as an intermediary between the government and private interest groups concerned with issues affecting women

## Organization

The commission consists of 18 commissioners, each are appointed by one of **four appointing authorities** which includes the **Governor**, the **Senate President**, the **Speaker of the House**, and the **Caucus of Women Legislators**. Commissioners engage in this work in a voluntary capacity and the operations are facilitated by one part-time and two full-time staff members who are assisted by interns year-round. The Commission meets monthly from September through June. Additionally, commissioners are members of at least one standing committee that meets monthly, and these include: Legislative and Public Policy Committee, Program and Planning Committee, Budget and Personnel Committee



## Programmatic Year 2020 - 2021 Budget

**Salaries:** \$164,132

**Office Expenses:** \$42,341

**Total 2021:** \$206,473

**MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (MCSW)  
ONE PAGE SYNOPSIS OF FY 2022 BUDGET PRESENTATION  
TO JOINT WAYS AND MEANS 3/9/21**

**FY22 BUDGET REQUEST: \$486,700**

Now is the time to adequately fund the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW). Women are 51% of the population in the Commonwealth. Economic recovery and sustained economic growth will be greatly impacted by addressing the issues that are disproportionately impacting women.

The MCSW's work **informs and supports decisions about policy and resources** locally, regionally and is now sought nationally. **A FY22 budget of \$486.7K is realistic, reasonable, and closer to what it would have been if the MCSW had been funded for inflation and growth.**

Significant hours of commissioner volunteerism (**avg. 7-46 per month pp.**) is commendable and valuable, but **not sustainable. Proper staffing going forward is critical to support deliverables that are aligned with the MCSW mission and statutory charges.**

**MCSW BUDGET HISTORY**

46K below the 2009 funding level 12 years ago



**The MCSW has been underfunded for 12 of the 23 years (52% of its existence) while:**

- Regional Commissions increased 266%
- Regional Commissioners increased 232%
- Employees decreased 28%
- Funding decreased a straight \$42K, which is 31% (adjusted for inflation at 1.8%) since 2009

|                               | 2009     | 2021     |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|
| <b>MCSW commissioners</b>     | 19       | 19       |
| <b>Regional Commissions</b>   | 3        | 11       |
| <b>Regional commissioners</b> | 31       | 103      |
| <b>Employees</b>              | 3.5 FTEs | 2.5 FTEs |
| <b>Funding</b>                | \$252K   | \$206K   |

**Statutory Charges of the MCSW**

- **Study, review and report** on the status of women in the Commonwealth
- **Advise executive and legislative bodies** on the effect of proposed legislation on women and recommend policies to state and local government
- **Inform leaders** of business, education, health care, state and local governments, and communications media of issues pertaining to women
- **Identify and recommend** qualified women for positions at all levels of government
- **Promote and facilitate collaboration** among local women's commissions and among women's organizations in the state

| FY22 PROPOSED BUDGET - NOW IS THE TIME | 2022             |
|--|------------------|
| <b>Salaries</b>                        | <b>\$355,300</b> |
| <b>Employee Related Costs</b>          | <b>\$15,000</b>  |
| <b>Operations</b>                      | <b>\$116,400</b> |
| <b>Total Budget</b>                    | <b>\$486,700</b> |

**FY22 BUDGET PRIORITIES**

• **Economic Recovery**

- o Improve and Expand Research
  - Data collection and analysis
- o Reporting to press, business community, legislators
- o Elevate the status of women in Massachusetts

• **Inclusion**

- o Improve and Extend Communication capabilities and meet requirements for Inclusion
  - Underserved and underrepresented communities
  - Multilingual translation and interpretation
  - Women of Color
  - Girls Outreach

• **Broaden and Deepen Reach through the Regional Commissions**

- o Coordinate with 103 volunteers
- o Work with legislators in their districts

**2020/2021 COVID-19 FOCUSED RESEARCH**

Data from 10,000+ women from more than 250 cities and towns across the Commonwealth

- o Virtual Hearings
- o Surveys
- o Written Testimony
- o Briefings with Appointing Authorities
- o Legislative Briefings
- April 2020: Report on the Impact of COVID-19 and Related Policy on Massachusetts Women and Girls
- October 2020: Child Care and Education During COVID-19: A Report on the Economic and Social Impact on Women in Massachusetts
- April 2021: Report on the Impact of COVID-19 on Women of Color

## **2021 Recommendations to Appointing Authorities**

The hearings, surveys, and listening sessions conducted by the MCSW in the 2020-2021 fiscal year were collectively considered to determine a set of recommendations. This year the MCSW hearings hosted constituents from across the commonwealth representing diverse backgrounds, identities, and experiences. The MCSW also partnered with the regional commissions on the status of women to understand local issues women face and help women access state politics and advocacy efforts. The 19 commissioners of the MCSW led discussions with other women's advocacy organizations, legislators, and constituents, sharing their perspectives and wisdom with the current and future leaders of the commonwealth.

The topics most frequently addressed in public hearings and reports included calls for racial justice, affordable and accessible childcare, and women's economic opportunity. Though these issues have long impacted society, all were exacerbated by the disproportionate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and Women of Color in the Commonwealth. The Commission recommends that in order to respond to these issues, the commonwealth must adopt a COVID-19 pandemic response that intentionally highlights and uplifts the needs of women and Women of Color.

## **Programs, Advocacy, and Education**

### **2020-2021 Hearings and Reports**

In accordance with the mandate to study, report, and advance the status of women in the commonwealth, the Commission holds a series of public hearings. These forums provide the public the opportunity to share information regarding issues and concerns important to women, as well as the gaps or barriers they have experienced. Since shifting to virtual hearings and surveys in March 2020 the Commission has experienced significant increased participation. Whereas an in-person hearing gathered 30-50 participants, the Commission is now hosting 80-200 participants during hearings and receives 2,500-4,000 survey responses. The voices of the public influence MCSW's programs and policies recommendations.

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, hearings were designed differently than in years past. Rather than general open hearings, the Commission launched targeted hearings, which sought to examine long-standing issues that were exacerbated due to the pandemic. In compliance with public health and social distancing mandates, all hearings were virtual.

### **Public Hearings**

The Commission carried out 4 concerted efforts to gather information, including virtual hearings and several listening sessions relative to the Girls Initiative. The topic areas of these efforts are as follows.

#### **Childcare Hearing, September 15, 2020**

- Key Issues: Exhaustion of working mothers, longstanding underinvestment in education, education equity, schools as essential support systems, access to childcare, job and income loss, the undervaluing of women's work

#### **Open Topic Hearing, November 19, 2020**

- Key Issues: Inequitable education systems, gender-based/domestic violence, affordable childcare, affordable housing, equitable pay, identity discrimination, foster care, incarceration

### **Women of Color Hearing, February 24, 2021**

- Key Issues: COVID-19 racial disparities, loss of income and work, access to childcare, access to reliable and affordable healthcare, skepticism about COVID-19 vaccine, affordable housing

### **Girls Initiative Listening Sessions, April 20-21, 2021**

- Key Issues: Need for support networks, accessibility to mental health support, self-esteem, racial justice, bullying, and social media, frustration with school curricula

### **Open Topic Hearing**

The MCSW hosted an Open Topic hearing on November 19, 2020 in order to give women of the Commonwealth the opportunity to voice their concerns and offer testimony of any topic relevant to their community. Although in previous years most hearings would be open to any topic, this hearing was the only general hearing conducted by the MCSW this year in order to accommodate special topic hearings for the reports. The public hearing was conducted over Zoom and reached 83 individuals of all ages and 54 towns of residence. Commissioners moderated discussion and received oral testimonies on subjects ranging from gender based and domestic violence, to inequitable education systems and affordable childcare. This open topic hearing allowed the commission to stay in touch with the self-reported needs of the women of Massachusetts.

### **Childcare and Education During COVID-19: A Report on the Economic and Social Impact on Women in Massachusetts**

Culture, history, and policy have contributed to the disproportionate burden of childcare placed upon women. This gender inequality, while still widely experienced, was greatly exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to evaluate its effects on women in the Commonwealth, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women conducted a survey with over 4,000 respondents and a public hearing on September 15 that represented 300 municipalities.

The quality and accessibility of childcare has a significant impact on the economic status of women and their families as well as the development of children. Furthermore, lack of childcare during the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affects the advancement of women in the short and long terms. The loss of in-person schooling and a great reduction in outlets for childcare compels many women to attend to the needs of the household. Consequently, women were forced to reduce their time at work or lose employment opportunities more often than men, compromising their financial stability and security.

On a larger scale, this would result in increased wage gaps and a poor representation of women in leadership and high-demanding and earning STEM fields. The results of the MCSW's survey and hearing substantiate the argument that women in Massachusetts need improved access to childcare and quality education in order for women's opportunities, rights, and advancement to be achieved.

### **Impact of COVID-19 and Related Recommendations to Improve the Status of Women of Color**

In assessing the impacts of the pandemic, it was clear that COVID-19 disproportionately impacted Women of Color (WOC). For this reason, the MCSW held a virtual hearing and launched a survey aimed to assess the status of Women of Color in the Commonwealth. In addition to receiving valuable insights directly from our intended respondents, the report provided the opportunity to be better informed about how intersectional factors of being a woman and person of color hinder one's ability to prosper as a result of racism and gender discrimination.

The pandemic only worsened preexisting and enduring social, political, and structural obstacles, all of which posed challenges to the pursuit of improved living standards, quality of life, and social status for WOC. The survey also inquired about topics such as the impact of COVID-19 on race, health, and healthcare, housing and safety, caregiving, and more.

Findings demonstrated stark inequities, for instance, 45% of WOC believed they were impacted by COVID-19 differently because of their race. Likewise, 43% of WOC

reported they had lost personal income due to the pandemic through reduced hours or job loss, the inability to qualify for unemployment, and the increased burden of caregiving. As it pertains to the area of health and healthcare, top concerns of WOC included the postponement of medical treatment, deterioration of health, and accessing health services. Moreover, in the area of Housing and Safety, at the time of the survey, 13.5% of Women of Color reported that they were falling behind on their rent or mortgage as opposed to non-Women of Color respondents at 3.5%. These examples capture just a fraction of the informative data gathered from this report, supporting long-standing evidence of enduring social and structural obstacles faced by WOC. Effectively providing a basis of continued policy interventions aimed to improve the lives and advance the rights of Women of Color.

### **Report on the Status of Girls in the Commonwealth and Related Recommendations**

The MCSW, observing its mandate to uplift the voices of women and girls, sought to intentionally center the needs of girls through the Girls Initiative. By hosting a series of listening sessions and conducting a survey, the second annual Girls Initiative focused on experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic for young women ages 13 to 22.

Girls were encouraged to lead conversations by presenting their concerns, many of which spoke to mental health, education, and relationships among other matters. To supplement the information gathered, a survey was launched specifically asking if their challenges were improved, worsened, or changed due to the pandemic and in which ways. Altogether, the Girls Initiative included the voices of 98 girls in over 40 communities across the Commonwealth. By intentionally seeking out and assessing the issues identified as relevant to young women, the MCSW can better advocate for policy that meets their needs while educating our partners, legislators, and the broader community about how to support girl-centered legislation.

## **Events and Programs**

### **International Women's Day 2021**

To celebrate International Women's day, the Commission co-hosted a virtual brunch to discuss the possibility of A Racial Justice and Feminist Recovery to the pandemic. International Women's day is both an opportunity to celebrate women's achievements, and a chance to take action to support the many women who were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As COVID-19 restrictions begin to lift, the legislature is hearing bills that seek to address some of the issues introduced and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The event, entitled "Resilience and Regeneration", connected women leaders in business, government, and advocacy to discuss strategies for achieving racial justice and feminist pandemic recovery.

Remarks were provided by the Congresswomen Catherine Clark and Ayanna Pressley. Chair of the Essex County Commission on the Status of Women, Ogor Okoye moderated a panel including representative Chynah Tyler, founder of the Boston Black Hospitality Coalition, Nia Grace, and Service Employees International Union Family Care Coordinator, Jynai McDonald. The Commission was able to connect women serving organizations, leaders, and constituents to further policy efforts as well as honor all the women who make invaluable contributions to their communities and to the Commonwealth.

### **Advocacy Day**

On May 19 the Commission hosted community members to educate about and advocate for programs and policies that increase women's and girls' access to opportunities and equality in the Commonwealth. Previously held at the State House, the Commission has shifted to a virtual program and has encouraged increased in-district communication with policy makers and elected officials.

Participants had the opportunity to testify in breakout rooms in front of their senators and representatives, regional and state commissioners, and other constituents in favor of bills that would positively impact their communities.

Highlighted policies included the Common Start Bill, the Work and Family Mobility Act, and the I AM Bill.

### **Eighteenth Annual Unsung Heroines of Massachusetts Program**

On June 23, the Commission conducted its eighteenth annual Unsung Heroines Celebration to acknowledge women of the Commonwealth who have uplifted their communities in spite of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This annual celebration of women across the Commonwealth who make outstanding contributions to their organizations and communities. The Heroines are women who truly make a difference. They are the women who use their time, talent, and enthusiasm to enrich the lives of others and make a difference in their neighborhoods, cities, and towns. In addition to the live event, the Commission also hosted a social media hashtag #CHeroines2021 so that family, friends, and community members could show public appreciation for their heroines.

### **MCSW Internship Program**

Continuing the MCSW's commitment to engaging the next generation of women to be an active voice and play a role in civic opportunities, the commission hosted 22 interns from across the country in the last year. Credit and non-credit internship positions are offered to undergraduate and graduate interns in the fall, spring, and summer semesters.

The internship program continues to grow with the work of the Commission and will continue in the 2021 programmatic year. Interns engaged with such projects as working with regional commissions, supporting legislative coalitions, and designing and implementing the Girls Initiative. Through their work at the commission, interns develop valuable and practical skills to prepare them for future careers in government, policy, and advocacy work.

### **MCSW Speakers Bureau**

The Commission is active in sharing information via public speaking at events and on panels organized through its speakers bureau. The goal is to raise awareness of issues facing women and families and educate and promote the resources of MCSW and our 11 regional Commissions. The program's aim is to encourage

women to engage in advocacy to achieve positive change for women throughout the Commonwealth. Speaking engagement this year included:

- June 24, National Academy of Science Engineering and Medicine panel about the effects of COVID-19 on Women's Work Experience, Chairwoman Denella Clark
- June 5, F.Y.R.E. Symposium, YW Boston, Legislative Committee Chairwoman Shaitia Spruell, Chair of the Legislative and Public Policy Committee
- April 27, Check-in and Chat about Money, Hampshire/Franklin Commission on the Status of Women, Chairwoman Denella Clark, Commissioner Shaitia Spruell
- March 24, Equal Pay Day: Where Do We Go From Here?, MA Treasurer's Office of Economic Empowerment, Commissioner Emerita Nina Kimball
- March 18, New Heights Charter School, Commissioners Marydith Tuitt, Marianne Fleckner, Shaitia Spruell
- March 8, International Women's Day, Nantucket Chamber of Commerce, Chairwoman Denella Clark
- January 7, Presenting findings from the MCSW's Child Care Report, Cambridge Women's Commission, Commissioner Shaitia Spruell, Chair of the Legislative and Public Policy Committee
- September 17, 2020, F.U.N. Conference, YW Boston, Chairwoman Clark

## **Priority Legislation**

As a part of its mission to provide an effective voice and to advocate for the women of Massachusetts, the MCSW has identified the bills as imperative and for this reason, is at the center of our legislative focus and action. In the 2020-2021 year, the Commission focused on addressing racial and gender equity, women's economic security, political participation, and protection from discrimination with the following legislation:

### **An Act providing Affordable and Accessible High-Quality Early Education and Care to Promote Child Development and Well-being and Support the Economy in the Commonwealth (H.605/S.362)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Sen. Jason M. Lewis and Reps. Kenneth I. Gordon and Adrian C. Madaro

The Common Start Bill would establish a universal system of affordable, high-quality early education and child care for all Massachusetts families. The system would cover early education and care for children aged birth through 5, after and out of school time for children age 5-12, and children with special needs through age 15

### **An Act Relative to Work and Family Mobility (H.3012/S.2061)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Sen. Brendan P. Crighton and Reps. Tricia Farley-Bouvier & Christine P. Barber

The Family Mobility Act would enable all qualified state residents to apply for a standard Massachusetts driver's license or ID, regardless of immigrant status, while keeping our Commonwealth in full compliance with REAL ID requirement

### **An Act to Ensure Gender Parity and Racial and Ethnic Diversity on Public Boards and Commissions (H.3157/S.2077)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Sen. Jason Lewis and Rep. Patricia Haddad

The Parity on Boards bill would promote diversity in leadership and governance that broadly reflects the demographics of our Commonwealth. The composition of each appointed public board and commission in the Commonwealth shall broadly reflect that of the general public

**An Act Supporting Parents Running for Public Office (S.477, H769)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Sen. Patricia Jehlen and Reps. Mike Connolly and Joan Meschino

Many working parents are discouraged from running for public office because of financial reasons. This bill would clarify that child care expenses for times while campaigning are not considered personal expenses.

**An Act to Increase Access to Disposable Menstrual Products in Prisons, Homeless Shelters, and Public Schools (H.2354/S.1445)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Sen. Patricia D. Jehlen and Reps Jay D. Livingstone and Christine P. Barber

The I am bill would provide access to free menstrual products to all menstruating individuals in schools, shelters & prisons

**An Act to Require Policies and Training to Prevent Unlawful Harassment, Including Sexual Harassment (H.1935, S.117)**

**Lead Sponsors:** Sen. Cynthia Creem Rep. Christine Barber

This bill would require Massachusetts employers to provide workplace-specific sexual harassment training that is live and interactive, as well as conduct climate surveys to identify risk factors and gauge the program's effectiveness. This training will promote respect in the workplace and avoid unlawful harassment, rather than simply focus on escaping liability.

## Regional and Local Commissions

Regional commissions on the status of Women are composed of 9-13 volunteer members who have had prior experience working towards the improvement of the status of women and exist to provide an effective voice for women and girls in their respective regions. Commissioners are drawn from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, sexual orientation, gender identification, and socio-economic backgrounds throughout the state. The MCSW makes appointments to regional commissions as well as provides guidance, support, and oversight.

### Regional Commissions

- **Berkshire County CSW** - 9 members from Berkshire County, Established in 2005
- **Bristol County CSW** - 9 members from Bristol County, Established in 2008
- **Cape Cod and Islands CSW** - 13 members from Barnstable, Dukes, and Nantucket Counties, Established in 2009
- **Essex County CSW** - 9 members from Essex County, Established in 2010
- **Worcester County CSW** - 9 members from Worcester County, Established in 2013
- **MetroWest CSW** - 9 members representing lower Middlesex County as well as towns from Norfolk and Worcester Counties, Established in 2015
- **Hampden County CSW** - 9 members from Hampden County, Established in 2017
- **Hampshire/Franklin Counties CSW** - 9 members from Hampshire and Franklin Counties, Established in 2017
- **Eastern Regional CSW** - 9 members representing Norfolk County, Established in 2018
- **Plymouth County CSW** - 9 members from Plymouth County, Established in 2018
- **Upper Middlesex CSW** - 9 members representing the cities and towns of Middlesex County, Established in 2018

### Local Commissions

There are currently 11 local women's commissions that represent various cities and towns in the Commonwealth. While these commissions are independent of MCSW,

the Commission serves as a resource and a partner and maintains contact with them on a regular basis. Local commissions include Boston's Mayor's Office for Women's Advancement, Brockton Mayor's Commission on Women's Issues, Brookline Commission for Women, Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women, Melrose Commission on Women, Newton Commission on the Status of Women, Quincy Mayor's Commission on Women, Somerville Commission for Women, Springfield Commission for Women, and Worcester City Manager's Advisory Committee on the Status of Women.

# Bristol Regional Commission Annual Report

## Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women Annual Report June 2021

### ***Purpose:***

The purpose of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women shall be to advance women toward full equity in all areas of life and to promote rights and opportunities for all women.

The mission of the Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women is to act as a permanent centralizing force and effective regional voice in the County of Bristol to ensure the equal status of women of every race, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, national origin, ability, age and sexual orientation in educational, economic, political, health, legal, and social spheres including the provision of information, referrals, and guidance.

In collaboration with the Massachusetts Commission, the Bristol County Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the full enjoyment of life for all women throughout their lives.

### ***Membership:***

Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women Commissioners as of June 2021:

**Iva Brito ~ New Bedford**  
**Kelli Burch Hiller ~ Freetown**  
**Michelle Keith ~ Dartmouth**  
**Holly McNamara ~ Somerset**  
**Diana Painter ~ Fairhaven**  
**Stephanie Taylor ~ Taunton**

The Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women currently has three (3) Commissioner vacancies.

### ***Hearings/Public Forums:***

Bristol County was not scheduled for a MCSW Public Hearing this year. The Covid-19 shutdown severely limited capacity to meet in public or hold public events. However, Zoom and Facebook Live was utilized to hold online meetings accessible to the public. Additionally, Bristol County Commissioners participated in the following online events held by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women:

September 15, 2020 – MCSW Public Hearing on Childcare and Education  
MCSW Legislative Briefing Review  
November 19, 2020 – MCSW Virtual Hearing  
February 24, 2021 – MCSW Women of Color Hearing  
April 2021 – MCSW Girls Initiative  
May 19, 2021 – MCSW Virtual Women’s Advocacy Day  
June 23, 2021 – MCSW Commonwealth Heroines Celebration

**Additional Activities:**

**• Meetings via ZOOM broadcast on Facebook Live**

In the past the Bristol County Commission has produced a Community Television show called “Voices of Women” at Dartmouth Community Media. Because of Covid-19 Pandemic restrictions, the Commission could not film in the studio but did begin to hold Zoom Meetings broadcast live on Facebook:

Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women was ... live.

Published by Michelle Keith · October 20, 2020 ·

Providing a permanent, effective voice for women in Bristol County Massachusetts.



Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women was ... live.

Published by Michelle Keith · December 15, 2020 ·



Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women was ... live.

Published by Michelle Keith · January 26 ·



● ***Wellness Initiative***

In light of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Bristol County Commissioners focused on a Wellness Initiative. The Wellness Initiative included sharing strategies with the public on how to increase wellbeing (during both ordinary times and pandemic times) and has resulted in a partnership with the New Bedford Whaling Historical Park for a Wellness Walk to be held on Saturday, November 13, 2021, 12-2PM where the Bristol County Commission will provide a table with information featuring the Commission as well as many other fun activities for the community to learn about the Commission, wellness, and local women's history.

- On December 3, 2020 we featured a Town Hall entitled: "Wellbeing in the Time of Covid-19" with Yale Professor Dr. Laurie Santos (a native of New Bedford) which can be viewed here: <https://fb.me/e/1m7sVQ9RZ>



**Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women**

Published by Michelle Keith · November 25, 2020 ·



Th 12/3, 6PM online

#wellbeing

<https://fb.me/e/1m7sVQ9RZ>



THU, DEC 3, 2020

**Wellbeing in the Time of COVID-19 Dr. Laurie Santos**

Health · 2,122 people

● ***Resource Initiative***

In light of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Bristol County Commissioners focused on a Resource Initiative. The Resource Initiative included sharing information on availability of resources to help decrease food insecurity, protect housing, and provide assistance with a variety of Covid-19 related challenges. As part of the Commission's Resource Initiative, on March 9, 2021 the Bristol County Commission partnered with our sister commission in Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden to provide an update on the Paid Family and Medical leave program in Massachusetts which can be viewed here: <https://fb.watch/6n6Kvlyc7w/>



Additionally for the Resource Initiative, on April 20, 2021 the Commission interviewed New Bedford Immigration Attorney Jennifer Velarde who delivered an update on *Issues in Immigration Law* with advice on where to seek assistance, which can be viewed here: <https://fb.watch/6na7tmslbn/>



● **Reflections on a Year of Pandemic Discussion**

On March 16, 2021 in recognition of the anniversary of the Covid-19 shutdown in Massachusetts, the Bristol County Commission reflected on the promise of reinvention featured in this TIME Magazine article: [https://time.com/5938730/covid-transformation-reinvention/?amp=true&twitter\\_impression=true](https://time.com/5938730/covid-transformation-reinvention/?amp=true&twitter_impression=true)

**Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women**  
Published by Michelle Keith · February 17 ·

Join @BCCSWMA on T 3/16, 7-8PM virtually for an inclusive discussion:  
"Reflections on a Year of Pandemic"  
where we'll talk about reinvention & the topics in this article:  
[https://time.com/593.../covid-transformation-reinvention/...](https://time.com/593.../covid-transformation-reinvention/) via @TIME  
Zoom access: <https://fb.me/e/ct65j5aZ5>



TIME.COM  
Even if You Feel Like This Was a Lost Year, That Might Not Be True

***Goals for 2021- 2022***

- 1. Collaborate with the Mass CSW and Regional Commissions to raise awareness of critical issues facing women in Massachusetts and to grow the participation and involvement of individual and organizational allies in the work of advancing equity for women of Massachusetts.**
- 2. Maintain regular contact with our legislators and officials on issues that concern women that have been identified as our priority areas of focus.**
- 3. Attend community events and share literature about the commission to promote awareness of our role and work to increase involvement in our activities by establishing Bristol County CSW Committees and Task Forces.**
- 4. Continue to collaborate with other local organizations to celebrate International Day of the Girl in October and International Women's Day in March.**

**5. More specifically, Commissioners met for their Semi-Annual Planning Meeting on June 15, 2021 and sketched out the 2021-2022 course of action and meeting schedule as follows:**

**T 9/21, 5:30PM – in person at Airport Grille – International Day of Peace with presentation on the Cure Violence model**

**T 10/19, 5:30PM – in person at Airport Grille – Bullying Prevention Month – wear blue in support of #BlueUP – presentation on Adult Bullying: Keeping the Job with action steps**

**Sat. 11/13, 12-2PM – in person at New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park – Wellness Walk featuring Women’s History Trail and Frederick Douglass Trail as well as action steps for good health and well-being (Global Goal 3).**

**T 12/21, 5:30PM – in person at Airport Grille – Holiday and Semi-Annual Planning Meeting**

**T 1/18, 5:30PM – online via ZOOM – guest speaker, topic to be determined**

**T 2/15, 5:30PM – online via ZOOM – guest speaker, Black History Month**

**T 3/15, 5:30PM – online via ZOOM – guest speaker, Women’s History Month**

**T 4/19, 5:30PM – in person at Airport Grille – Advocacy Day planning**

**T 5/17 – participate in MCSW Advocacy Day in lieu of meeting**

**T 6/21, 5:30PM – in person at Airport Grille – Semi-Annual Planning Meeting**

**Submitted by: Michelle Keith, Co-Chair of the Bristol County Commission of the Status of Women**



## **Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women**



### **MEETING AGENDA**

**09.15.2020 7:00-8:00PM**

In lieu of tonight's meeting, please attend the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women's Public Hearing on Childcare & Education, 6-8PM online

Next meeting: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday: October 20, 2020, 7-8PM online

Dates to note:

- Tuesday – November 3, 2020 Election Day (100<sup>th</sup> Suffrage)
- Monday – March 8, 2021 International Women's Day
- May 2021 - Women's Advocacy Day
- June 2021 - Unsung Heroines Day
- Thursday – August 26, 2021 - Women's Equality Day



## Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women



### MEETING AGENDA

**10.20.2020 7:00-8:00PM**

ZOOM Meeting with Facebook Live

1. Welcome Commissioners – call to order
2. Facebook Live/Zoom test meeting
3. MCSW Legislative Briefing Review  
<https://www.facebook.com/292817120532/posts/10164428510430533/>  
passcode: 2VW718s&
4. Wellness Initiative
5. Resource Initiative
6. New Commissioner Outreach
7. Adjourn

Next meeting: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday: November 17, 2020, 7-8PM online

Dates to note:       Tuesday – November 3, 2020 Election Day (100<sup>th</sup> Suffrage)  
Monday – March 8, 2021 International Women’s Day  
Wednesday – May 19, 2021 – Women’s Advocacy Day  
Wednesday - June 23, 2021 - Unsung Heroines Day  
Thursday – August 26, 2021 - Women’s Equality Day

Meeting can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=695051734468373>



## **Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women**



### **MEETING AGENDA 11.17.2020 7:00-8:00PM**

In lieu of tonight's meeting, please attend the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women's Virtual Hearing, 5-7PM online

Next meeting: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday: December 15, 2020, 7-8PM online

Dates to note:      Monday – March 8, 2021 International Women's Day  
                            Wednesday – May 19, 2021 – Women's Advocacy Day  
                            Wednesday - June 23, 2021 - Unsung Heroines Day  
                            Thursday – August 26, 2021 - Women's Equality Day



## Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women



### MEETING AGENDA

12.15.2020 7:00-8:00PM

ZOOM Meeting with Facebook Live

1. Welcome Commissioners – call to order
2. Wellness Initiative
3. Resource Initiative
4. New Commissioner Outreach
5. Adjourn

Next meeting: January 26, 2021, 7-8PM online

Dates to note:       Monday – March 8, 2021 International Women’s Day  
                              Wednesday – May 19, 2021 – Women’s Advocacy Day  
                              Wednesday - June 23, 2021 - Unsung Heroines Day  
                              Thursday – August 26, 2021 - Women’s Equality Day

Meeting can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/151198564895682/videos/3748869231847291>



## Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women



### MEETING AGENDA

01.26.2021 7:00-8:00PM

ZOOM Meeting with Facebook Live

1. Welcome Commissioners – call to order
2. Introductions by Commissioners:
  - name
  - city/town
  - why you became a Commissioner
  - what you would like BCCSW to accomplish in difference made for women
3. Wellness Initiative – Wellness Walk will take place on Sat. 11/13/2021
4. New Commissioner Outreach
5. Adjourn

Next meeting: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday: February January 16, 2021, 7-8PM online

Dates to note: Monday – March 8, 2021 International Women’s Day  
Wednesday – May 19, 2021 – Women’s Advocacy Day  
Wednesday - June 23, 2021 - Unsung Heroines Day  
Thursday – August 26, 2021 - Women’s Equality Day  
Saturday – November 13, 2021 Wellness Walk

Meeting can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/151198564895682/videos/412528733309376>



## Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women



### MEETING AGENDA

**02.16.2021 7:00-8:00PM**

ZOOM Meeting with Facebook Live

Meeting Cancelled

Next meeting: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday: March 16, 2021, 7-8PM online

Dates to note:

- Monday – March 8, 2021 International Women’s Day
- Wednesday – May 19, 2021 – Women’s Advocacy Day
- Wednesday - June 23, 2021 - Unsung Heroines Day
- Thursday – August 26, 2021 - Women’s Equality Day
- Saturday – November 13, 2021 – Wellness Walk



## Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women



### MEETING AGENDA

03.16.2021 7:00-8:00PM

ZOOM Meeting with Facebook Live

Reflections on a Year of Pandemic

1. Welcome Commissioners – call to order
2. Commissioners will introduce themselves including their city/town and reflect on their experiences, what they have discovered during the past year of pandemic.  
See this TIME article: [https://time.com/5938730/covid-transformation-reinvention/?amp=true&\\_twitter\\_impression=true](https://time.com/5938730/covid-transformation-reinvention/?amp=true&_twitter_impression=true)
3. New Commissioner Outreach
4. Adjourn

Next meeting: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday – April 20, 2021, 7-8PM online

Dates to note:       Wednesday – May 19, 2021 – Women’s Advocacy Day  
                              Wednesday - June 23, 2021 - Unsung Heroines Day  
                              Thursday – August 26, 2021 - Women’s Equality Day  
                              Saturday – November 13, 2021 – Wellness Walk

### Even if You Feel Like This Was a Lost Year, That Might Not Be True

By [Joanne Lipman](#)

February 16, 2021 8:00 AM EST

The first anniversary of the coronavirus quarantine is fast approaching, and for many of us, it’s felt like a lost year. “It’s OK to Feel Overwhelmed and Be Unproductive,” [Psychology Today](#) assured its readers. “You’re not lazy: Why it’s hard to be productive right now,” read a recent [CNET](#) headline. When the *Washington Post* asked readers to describe 2020 in a word, among their top suggestions were “fallow,” “limbo” and “lost.” The *New York Times* suggested “Blursday,” for its repetitive “Groundhog Day-esque quality.” My daughter calls it a collective “gap year.”

Yet this year may not have been as lost as we fear. While researching a book on reinvention, I’ve interviewed dozens of experts on transformation in all its forms. I’ve spoken to neuroscientists who study creativity, psychologists who work with trauma survivors, cognitive scientists who study “aha” moments and business-school professors focused on innovation and career reinvention. The types of transformations they study vary. Yet I’ve been struck by the one step that every type of reinvention has in common: it’s preceded by an in-between time, a seemingly fallow period much like the one we find ourselves in now.

To be sure, these scientists aren’t suggesting there’s a silver lining to a year that’s brought an [unimaginable death toll](#) and raging unemployment. What they offer, instead, is a glimpse of how this “lost year” fits in on the journey we are attempting to navigate toward a [post-pandemic world](#) and the hope that, whether we experienced devastating loss or an uneasy feeling of stagnation, we will find better days ahead.

*[Want to get mentally stronger under stress? Sign up for TIME’s guide to building resilience.](#)*

The prolonged shutdown, by throwing us off-kilter, may help us reimagine our futures, says psychologist Richard Tedeschi, professor emeritus at University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He would know. When he and colleague Lawrence Calhoun studied survivors of trauma – [hurricanes](#), [war](#), [domestic violence](#), the [death of loved ones](#) – they found that after a time, a significant portion of them report feeling renewed. They have a sense of fresh possibilities in life, an openness to following new pathways.

In the mid-1990s, the two men coined a phrase for the phenomenon: [posttraumatic growth](#). Almost half of all trauma survivors ultimately experience it, a 2019 [meta-analysis](#) of 26 studies concluded. It can affect societies as a whole after a communal trauma like wartime or pandemic. But to achieve it, you first must go through a period of struggle, when you throw out assumptions about how life was supposed to play out. “It takes time,” Tedeschi told me. “It takes a while to right yourself and figure out which direction you’re going to go.”

Consider the case of a 1987 [ferry accident](#), when the *Herald of Free Enterprise* capsized on its way from Belgium to England, killing 193 passengers and crew. In the immediate aftermath, psychologist [Stephen Joseph](#) and his colleagues were able to interview survivors, who not surprisingly reported suffering nightmares and anxiety. Yet when Joseph interviewed them again [three years later](#), 43% reported that their lives and attitudes had changed for the better.

Survivors of a New Zealand [earthquake](#), state terrorism [in Chile](#), and the [9/11 terror attacks](#) have also reported growth. Tedeschi has found that the positive outcomes generally fall into five categories: appreciation for life, relationships with others, spiritual changes, personal strength and, notably, “new possibilities in life.” A 2013 University of Pennsylvania study of 373 people found the majority also reported increased [creativity](#) after trauma.

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“It takes a while to right yourself and figure out which direction you’re going to go.”

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It’s too soon to know the long-term impact of COVID-19’s “lost year.” But there’s some evidence it is already [prompting people to re-evaluate their lives and careers](#). [Millions have lost their jobs](#), and entire job categories, like those in hospitality and live entertainment, have been wiped out, at least for now. Millions of others who are still employed are rethinking their futures. In a [November survey](#), 64% of Americans said they were either looking for a new job or would consider a new one.

Intriguingly, London Business School professor Herminia Ibarra found that an in-between time when you feel unproductive is critical for people who want to switch careers. She calls it a “liminal period,” when you’re “existing betwixt and between a past that is clearly gone and a future that is still uncertain.” In a [Harvard Business Review](#) article published toward the beginning of the pandemic, she wrote that it’s essential to “embrace the liminal” period, even though people going through it “feel unmoored, lose their bearings,” because it “prevents you from shutting down prematurely and missing better options that still lie ahead.”

Scientists who study creativity have similarly pinpointed that fallow period as the key to breakthroughs. In their labs, it’s known as the “[incubation period](#).” It’s what happens when you’re stumped by a problem and give up in frustration, then wake up in the middle of the night knowing the solution. Drexel University psychologist John Kounios explains that breakthroughs often come about after you’re blocked and then are distracted by exercise, or sleep, or taking a shower. That’s when your subconscious brain can weave together disparate thoughts that then may pop up into your consciousness as an “aha” moment. The “wandering mind can stumble on to insights. If you always have those blinders on like a horse, you are only looking straight ahead,” Kounios says. “It’s those peripheral thoughts that trigger insights.” There’s a reason screenwriter [Aaron Sorkin](#) has said that when he has writer’s block, he takes a shower – up to eight a day!

This latest research sheds light on why some singular achievements have taken place during previous pandemics. [Isaac Newton](#) was a Cambridge student, quarantined because of the bubonic plague at his family's apple orchard, when he made some of his key discoveries about gravity. William [Shakespeare](#) wrote some of his most monumental works during plague outbreaks, including *King Lear*. Clearly, the plague didn't make either of them geniuses, nor, sadly, will quarantine make any of us any smarter. But what it did do was create the space for thinking and dreaming, which allowed new ideas to flourish.

The science of these fallow periods may be recent, but the "in-between" period has long played a starring role in history and literature. Consider these examples from recent years: In Katherine May's *Wintering*, she defines the title as "a fallow period in life when you're cut off from the world, feeling rejected, sidelined, blocked from progress, or cast into the role of an outsider." In *Life Is in the Transitions*, Bruce Feiler refers to this period as the "messy middle" that leads to a "new beginning." Brene Brown, in *Rising Strong*, calls it a "middle space of struggle" when you're "in the dark."

In a sense, we're all in that "middle space of struggle" right now and it's important to recognize that we won't be in this limbo forever. But if you do want to give yourself a nudge, the experts have a few suggestions. Among them:

**Take a break. A shower, a run, a nap.** Drexel's Kounios has found that distracting yourself when you're stuck is often the best way to solve a problem or come up with a new idea. In a 2015 survey of 1,114 people, [Linda Ovington](#), a researcher at Charles Sturt University in Australia, found that 80% reported having "aha" moments, and among the most frequent places they had them were in the shower, while exercising, in transport or in nature.

**Daydream.** We spend 25% to 50% of our time [daydreaming](#), a figure that mental health experts believe has [increased](#) for some people during the pandemic. The good news is, in a study of physicists and writers, psychologists at the University of California, Santa Barbara, found that 20% of their most original ideas arose while daydreaming. What's more, the ideas they had while daydreaming were more likely to solve "an impasse on a problem and to be experienced as 'aha' moments" than when they were consciously focused on their work. In a 2013 [analysis](#), meanwhile, University of Minnesota psychologist Eric Klinger found that mind-wandering helps people explore possible new goals "such as job possibilities or personal relationships."

**Talk to an "expert companion."** Tedeschi and his colleagues have found that to achieve post-traumatic growth, it helps to talk to a person who knows you well. The person doesn't need to be a professional; it's often a friend or relative. These conversations can be revelatory even without trauma. As a young man, Danny Meyer was considering law school when his uncle told him, "Since you were a child, all you've ever talked or thought about is food... Why don't you just open a restaurant?" That comment set Meyer, now CEO of Union Square Hospitality Group, on a path to become one of the most successful restaurateurs in the world. "I knew I loved restaurants, but it just never occurred to me that that was a viable career choice" until then, Meyer told me.

**-Try on "possible selves."** [Psychologists](#) believe we can imagine different variations of who we might become. As Ibarra, the business professor who specializes in career reinvention, has written, "the path to your next career will be circuitous. To cover all of the ground you'll need to cover, it's vital to let yourself imagine a divergent set of possible selves and futures. Embrace that process and explore as many of them as you can."

**-And finally, don't be too hard on yourself.** I've certainly had my days and weeks of feeling like I'm spinning my wheels. It's easy to get caught up in a doomscrolling cycle of despair, even as we feel that we should *do something*. Yet the experts I've spoken with believe this period of fallow, of discomfort, does serve a purpose. "When society gets too comfortable, it gets too rigid," Kounios says. "It's when you are forced to think and act differently that it liberates the mind to be creative."



## Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women



### MEETING AGENDA

**04.20.2021 7:00-8:00PM**

ZOOM Meeting with Facebook Live

Immigration Law Discussion & Update

Guest Speaker: Jennifer Velarde, Immigration Attorney

Next meeting: Wednesday – May 19, 2021 – Women’s Advocacy Day

Dates to note:

Wednesday - June 23, 2021 - Unsung Heroines Day

Thursday – August 26, 2021 - Women’s Equality Day

Saturday – November 13, 2021 – Wellness Walk

Meeting can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/151198564895682/videos/835524657309599>



## **Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women**



### **MEETING AGENDA 05.18.2021 7:00-8:00PM**

In lieu of tonight's meeting, please attend the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women's Advocacy Day, Wednesday, May 19, 2021, 12PM

Next meeting: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday: June 15, 2021, 5-7PM in person at Airport Grille, New Bedford

Dates to note:      Wednesday - June 23, 2021 - Unsung Heroines Day  
                            Thursday – August 26, 2021 - Women's Equality Day  
                            Saturday – November 13, 2021 – Wellness Walk



## Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women



### MEETING AGENDA

**06.15.2021 5:00- 7:00PM**

Airport Grille, 1569 Airport Road, New Bedford, MA 02746

1. Welcome Commissioners – call to order
2. Wellness Walk Update
3. Ideas & Strategy Discussion for 2021-2022
4. Wrap Up & Next Steps
5. Adjourn

Next meeting: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday: September 21, 2021, 5:30PM at Airport Grille, New Bedford

Dates to note:      Wednesday - June 23, 2021 - Unsung Heroines Day, 12PM Facebook Live  
                            Thursday – August 26, 2021 - Women’s Equality Day  
                            Saturday – November 13, 2021 – Wellness Walk



## **Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women**



### **NO MINUTES**

**09.15.2020 7:00-8:00PM**

In lieu of the regularly scheduled monthly meeting from September through June, BCCSW Commissioners attended the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women's Public Hearing on Childcare & Education, 6-8PM online.



## Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women



### MEETING MINUTES

10.20.2020 7:00-8:00PM

ZOOM Meeting with Facebook Live

In attendance: Michelle Keith, Diana Painter, Erica Scott Pacheco  
Absent: Iva Brito, Kelli Burch Hiller, Holly McNamara, Stephanie Taylor

Commissioners discussed the direction of the Wellness Initiative, the Resource Initiative, the MCSW Legislative Briefing with the objective of helping to improve well-being via statewide policy solutions for the crisis in housing, childcare, employment, and business viability given the unpredictability of Covid-19.

Meeting can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=695051734468373>



## Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women



### MEETING MINUTES

12.15.2020 7:00-8:00PM

ZOOM Meeting with Facebook Live

In attendance: Michelle Keith, Diana Painter, Stephanie Taylor  
Absent: Iva Brito, Kelli Burch Hiller, Holly McNamara

Commissioners delivered an update on the Wellness Initiative providing a link to a recent Wellness Town Hall by Yale Professor Laurie Santos featured on the BCCSW Facebook page offering action steps for well-being in the time of Covid-19. Additionally, in support of the Resource Initiative, Commissioners shared resources such as Feeding America and other groups offering help to people during Covid-19. Commissioners also delivered an update on the implementation of the Paid Family Leave Legislation taking effect in January 2021.

Meeting can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/151198564895682/videos/3748869231847291>



## **Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women**



### **MEETING MINUTES**

**01.26.2021 7:00-8:00PM**

ZOOM Meeting with Facebook Live

In attendance: Iva Brito, Kelli Burch Hiller, Michelle Keith, Holly McNamara, Diana Painter, Stephanie Taylor

Absent: all Commissioners present

Commissioners reconnected as a group (Semi-Annual Planning & Strategy session did not take place in December 2020) to discuss why they became Commissioners and what they hoped to achieve for women in our region. The objective of the meeting was to help establish common direction for the group.

Meeting can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/151198564895682/videos/412528733309376>



## Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women



### MEETING MINUTES

03.16.2021 7:00-8:00PM

ZOOM Meeting with Facebook Live

Reflections on a Year of Pandemic

In attendance: Iva Brito, Michelle Keith, Diana Painter  
Absent: Kelli Burch Hiller, Holly McNamara, Stephanie Taylor  
Guests: former Commissioner Gloria Cabral, Natasha Sretchen

The attached article was read into the record. Commissioners and guests shared their reflections on a year of pandemic on the anniversary of the Massachusetts Covid-19 shut-down.

The meeting can be viewed in the ZOOM archives here:

[https://zoom.us/recording/detail?meeting\\_id=UhiDcJ1aQYqoxgcSjWem2w%3D%3D](https://zoom.us/recording/detail?meeting_id=UhiDcJ1aQYqoxgcSjWem2w%3D%3D)

Even if You Feel Like This Was a Lost Year, That Might Not Be True

By [Joanne Lipman](#)

February 16, 2021 8:00 AM EST

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Yet this year may not have been as lost as we fear. While researching a book on reinvention, I've interviewed dozens of experts on transformation in all its forms. I've spoken to neuroscientists who study creativity, psychologists who work with trauma survivors, cognitive scientists who study "aha" moments and business-school professors focused on innovation and career reinvention. The types of transformations they study vary. Yet I've been struck by the one step that every type of reinvention has in common: it's preceded by an in-between time, a seemingly fallow period much like the one we find ourselves in now.

To be sure, these scientists aren't suggesting there's a silver lining to a year that's brought an [unimaginable death toll](#) and raging unemployment. What they offer, instead, is a glimpse of how this "lost year" fits in on the journey we are attempting to navigate toward a [post-pandemic world](#) and the hope that, whether we experienced devastating loss or an uneasy feeling of stagnation, we will find better days ahead.

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Consider the case of a 1987 [ferry accident](#), when the *Herald of Free Enterprise* capsized on its way from Belgium to England, killing 193 passengers and crew. In the immediate aftermath, psychologist [Stephen Joseph](#) and his colleagues were able to interview survivors, who not surprisingly reported suffering nightmares and anxiety. Yet when Joseph interviewed them again [three years later](#), 43% reported that their lives and attitudes had changed for the better.

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either of them geniuses, nor, sadly, will quarantine make any of us any smarter. But what it did do was create the space for thinking and dreaming, which allowed new ideas to flourish.

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**Daydream.** We spend 25% to 50% of our time daydreaming, a figure that mental health experts believe has increased for some people during the pandemic. The good news is, in a study of physicists and writers, psychologists at the University of California, Santa Barbara, found that 20% of their most original ideas arose while daydreaming. What’s more, the ideas they had while daydreaming were more likely to solve “an impasse on a problem and to be experienced as ‘aha’ moments” than when they were consciously focused on their work. In a 2013 [analysis](#), meanwhile, University of Minnesota psychologist Eric Klinger found that mind-wandering helps people explore possible new goals “such as job possibilities or personal relationships.”

**Talk to an “expert companion.”** Tedeschi and his colleagues have found that to achieve post-traumatic growth, it helps to talk to a person who knows you well. The person doesn’t need to be a professional; it’s often a friend or relative. These conversations can be revelatory even without trauma. As a young man, Danny Meyer was considering law school when his uncle told him, “Since you were a child, all you’ve ever talked or thought about is food... Why don’t you just open a restaurant?” That comment set Meyer, now CEO of Union Square Hospitality Group, on a path to become one of the most successful restaurateurs in the world. “I knew I loved restaurants, but it just never occurred to me that that was a viable career choice” until then, Meyer told me.

**-Try on “possible selves.”** [Psychologists](#) believe we can imagine different variations of who we might become. As Ibarra, the business professor who specializes in career reinvention, has written, “the path to your next career will be circuitous. To cover all of the ground you’ll need to cover, it’s vital to let yourself imagine a divergent set of possible selves and futures. Embrace that process and explore as many of them as you can.”

**-And finally, don’t be too hard on yourself.** I’ve certainly had my days and weeks of feeling like I’m spinning my wheels. It’s easy to get caught up in a doomscrolling cycle of despair, even as we feel that we should *do something*. Yet the experts I’ve spoken with believe this period of fallow, of discomfort, does serve a purpose. “When society gets too comfortable, it gets too rigid,” Kounios says. “It’s when you are forced to think and act differently that it liberates the mind to be creative.”



## **Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women**



### **MEETING MINUTES**

**04.20.2021 7:00-8:00PM**

ZOOM Meeting with Facebook Live

In attendance: Michelle Keith, Diana Painter

Absent: Iva Brito, Kelli Burch Hiller, Holly McNamara, Stephanie Taylor

Immigration Law Discussion & Update

Guest Speaker: Jennifer Velarde, Immigration Attorney

Meeting can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/151198564895682/videos/835524657309599>



## **Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women**



**NO MINUTES**

**05.18.2021 7:00-8:00PM**

In lieu of the regularly scheduled monthly meeting from September through June, BCCSW Commissioners attended the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women's Advocacy Day, Wednesday, May 19, 2021, 12PM



## Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women



### MEETING MINUTES

**06.15.2021 5:00- 7:00PM**

Airport Grille, 1569 Airport Road, New Bedford, MA 02746

In attendance: Iva Brito, Michelle Keith, Holly McNamara, Diana Painter.  
Absent: Kelli Burch Hiller, Stephanie Taylor

Commissioners met for their Semi-Annual Planning Meeting to sketch out the 2021-2022 course of action as follows:

T 9/21, 5:30PM – in person at Airport Grille – International Day of Peace with presentation on the Cure Violence model

T 10/19, 5:30PM – in person at Airport Grille – Bullying Prevention Month – wear blue in support of #BlueUP – presentation on Adult Bullying: Keeping the Job with action steps

Sat. 11/13, 12-2PM – in person at New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park – Wellness Walk featuring Women’s History Trail and Frederick Douglass Trail as well as action steps for good health and well-being (Global Goal 3).

T 12/21, 5:30PM – in person at Airport Grille – Holiday and Semi-Annual Planning Meeting

T 1/18, 5:30PM – online via ZOOM – guest speaker, topic to be determined

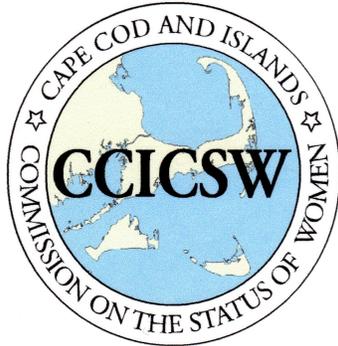
T 2/15, 5:30PM – online via ZOOM – guest speaker, Black History Month

T 3/15, 5:30PM – online via ZOOM – guest speaker, Women’s History Month

T 4/19, 5:30PM – in person at Airport Grille – Advocacy Day planning

T 5/17 – participate in MCSW Advocacy Day in lieu of meeting

T 6/21, 5:30PM – in person at Airport Grille – Semi-Annual Planning Meeting



**Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women**

**2021 Annual Report**

***Commissioners***

**Anna Noble Dunphy, *Chair* (Falmouth)**  
**Tara Wallace, *Vice Chair* (Hyannis)**  
**Linda Cebula, *Secretary* (Harwich Port)**

**Mary Waygan, *Treasurer* (Mashpee)**  
**Helen Bresnahan, *Emerita* (Bourne)**

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**Tina Games (Harwich)**  
**Natalia Frois (Hyannis)**  
**Katia Dacunha (Hyannis)**  
**Lynda wan-N'Tani (Harwich)**  
**Mary Reardon Johnson (South Yarmouth)**  
**Sue Mynttinen (Nantucket) – \*appointed January 2021**  
**Catarina Parache (Hyannis) – \*appointed January 2021**  
**Donna Todd Rivers (Dennis) – \*appointed January 2021**

**Joan Walsh Freedman (South Yarmouth) – \*completed term December 2020**  
**Lisa McNeill (Yarmouth Port) – \*completed term December 2020**

**Lisa Malcolm** (*Osterville*) – *\*resigned March 2020*

## **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 2020-2021**

The Cape Cod and Islands Commission established three key goals: (1) To conduct a virtual listening circle for women of color in the CCICSW region to determine their needs and concerns; (2) To conduct an online survey to determine what the top issues and concerns are for women in the Cape Cod and Islands region; (3) To determine legislative priorities for advocacy on a regional and local level, and to prepare for the MCSW Advocacy Day

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 a virtual listening circle for women of color in summer/fall 2020
- Conduct an online survey to determine the top issues and concerns for Cape/Islands women
- Compile testimony and discussion for reporting purposes

### *Advocate for Legislative Issues:*

- Determine the state legislations related to the concerns of Cape/Islands women
- 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
- Host a virtual legislative brunch for CCICSW Commissioners and legislators

### *Increase Visibility:*

- Create and maintain CCICSW publicity/media list
- Send out media releases and digital flyers for listening circle, survey, legislative brunch

- Send listening circle and survey reports to Cape and Islands legislators
- Maintain CCICSW Facebook page and explore other social media opportunities

## **MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

The membership ad-hoc committee - which consisted of Joan Freedman, Anna Dunphy, Mary Reardon Johnson, and Helen Bresnahan (emerita) - worked together to interview applicants to fill three vacancies. Three new Commissioners were appointed – Sue Mynttinen, Catarina Parache, Donna Todd Rivers (all of whom began their terms in January 2021). Each new Commissioner was assigned to a current Commissioner for individual orientation and mentoring.

## **WORKING GROUP SUMMARIES**

### ***Visibility***

The *Visibility* work group consisted of five Commissioners – Tina Games, Joan Freedman, Tara Wallace, Natalia Frois, and Sue Mynttinen – who spent the year following up on various opportunities 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 fall listening circle and survey reports. A media release was also sent out announcing the launch of the winter survey. In addition to promoting the listening circle and survey, 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 summer of 2021.

### ***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. The workgroup recommended seven bills for consideration by CCICSW (listed below) which were discussed at our April 2021 meeting and approved by the full Commission.

CCICSW was represented at Advocacy Day (held virtually this year) by the following Commissioners: Mary Waygan, Tina Games, Sue Mynttinen, Anna Dunphy, Katia Dacunha, Tara

Wallace, Catarina Parache – with Commissioners Waygan, Games, Mynttinen acting as co-hosts for the Bristol County/Cape Cod and Islands breakout group.

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

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Legislative Workgroup Recommendations Approved by the Full Commission

- No Cost Calls: An Act Relative to Inmate Telephone Calls SD.800
- End Child Marriage: An Act to End Child Marriage HD.718
- Natural Hairstyles: An Act prohibiting discrimination based on natural hairstyles HD.447
- The I Am Bill: An Act to increase access to disposable menstrual products HD.651/SD.748
- An Act Relative to Virtual Meetings Of Appointed Statewide Public Bodies HD.1300/SD.993
- The Common Start Bill: An Act Providing Affordable & Accessible High Quality Early Education & Care To Promote Child Development & Well-Being HD.1960/SD.1307
- The Family Mobility Act: An Act Relative to Work and Family Mobility HD.3012/SD2061

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

The *Hearing More Voices* working group consisted of six Commissioners – Lisa McNeill, Lisa Malcolm, Katia Dacunha, Anna Dunphy, Natalia Frois, Lynda wan-N’Tani, Catarina Parache (the latter joining the workgroup after being appointed in January).

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, conducting surveys, working with the Visibility working group to promote the events, and reporting on the events.

Below are two reports written by the working group and approved by the full Commission.

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**Cape and Islands Commission on the Status for Women**  
***Hearing More Voices:***  
***Listening Circle for Women of Color and Indigenous Women***  
**August 17, 2020**

**Planning/Background**

The Hearing More Voices/Reaching More Women Working Group is charged by the full CCICSW with two main goals: 1. “to meet women where they are” in order to gather feedback and input from a more demographically diverse representation of women (through small informal “Listening Circles” targeted at different segments of our community), and 2. to hold a formal Public Hearing every other year open to all women (representing the opposite years of MCSW’s Public Hearings).

In late winter/early Spring 2020, the Hearing More Voices/Reaching More Women Working Group started working on a Listening Circle to be held in Spring 2020 on Nantucket; these plans changed due to COVID19 which required the Listening Circle be held online (via the Zoom Platform). We further adjusted our planning with the backdrop of national dialogue and movement around social and racial justice. It was explored by the HMV WG to focus the Listening Circle on Women of Color during the summer (August), brought to the full Commission for discussion, and approved at the June 10 Commission meeting.

The original planning group included, Katia Regina Dacunha, Lisa Malcolm, Lisa McNeill, and Natalia Frois. This group planned the general format of the Listening Circles and began working to implement the plan. Tasks were split up as the Working Group made plans for logistics (Zoom), promotion, format of the Listening Circle, and who would speak. In July/August, three additional Commissioners volunteered on the HMV WG for the August Listening Circle: Tara Vargas Wallace, Mary Waygan, and Lynda wan-N’Tani.

As agreed at the July Commission meeting, the CCICSW’s second Listening Circle was planned for Women of Color, and we added to the title “and Indigenous Women” at the recommendation. It was agreed that we would offer three Breakout Zoom Rooms for English, Spanish and Portuguese speakers. Flyers, invitations and announcements were in all three languages and went out on Facebook, email, to elected officials, to media outlets, and on various email networks. Independence House, the Cape and Islands regional domestic violence organization, co-sponsored this event.

Registration was done through Zoom, and women were required to register in advance (to provide for meeting security of the online meeting). Women wanting to attend emailed [CCICSWInfo@gmail.com](mailto:CCICSWInfo@gmail.com), and a Zoom link was emailed to them so that they could register on Zoom. Twenty-one (21) women registered in advance, and sixteen (16) attended, along with eight (8) Commissioners. Some women may have had trouble logging on to the Zoom platform, and Katia Regina Dacunha agreed to follow up with them.

**Introduction to Women of Color & Indigenous Women Listening Circle on Zoom**

Commissioners in Attendance: Katia Regina Dacunha, Natalia Frois, Lisa Malcolm, Lisa McNeill, Tara Vargas Wallace, Mary Waygan, Lynda wan-N’Tani and Joan Walsh-Freedman

In addition to the commissioners, sixteen (16) women zoomed into the listening session.

Commissioners Tara Vargas Wallace, Natalia Frois, and Katia Regina Dacunha opened the listening session and addressed attendees in English, Spanish and Portuguese respectively with the following statement: The Cape and Islands Commission on the Status for Women exists to advance women toward full equality and to promote opportunities for all women. The purpose of the Commission shall be to advance women toward full equity in all areas of life and to promote rights and opportunities for all women. The Commission’s duties include: studying, reviewing and reporting on the status of women on the Cape and Islands, promoting and facilitating collaboration among local women’s organizations, recommending policies that benefit women to agencies, officers of the state and local government and holding fact-finding hearings and other public forums as it may deem necessary. Applications are welcomed from individuals residing in Barnstable, Dukes, or Nantucket counties with experience in issues pertaining to women.

Commissioner Tara Vargas Wallace announced that the listening session would be recorded and advised any attendees wanting to remain anonymous to turn off their video and remove their name from their image. (Recording began.)

Commissioner Tara Vargas Wallace acknowledged the sessions are being held in three languages, and took this opportunity to acknowledge that the hearing was being held on Cape Cod, the land of the Wampanoag People, and that the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe has revitalized their native language. Danielle Tobey, a member of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, thanked Commissioner Vargas Wallace for acknowledging the Wampanoag People and stated “We are still here”.

Each commissioner and most participants introduced themselves. Participants represented the following: graduate student in education; Chair of a Town Inclusion and Diversity Committee; educators; mother & business owner; social justice advocates; attorney practicing family law; Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal member; child case manager; domestic violence victim advocate; poet; union organizer; union negotiator; and social justice activists.

The listening session broke out into two meeting rooms, one conducted in Portuguese and the other in English. (The Spanish speaker(s) felt comfortable attending the English language break out session.)

### **English Language Breakout Room**

The following topics of concern were raised: the impacts due to the spread of the new coronavirus COVID-19, domestic violence and abuse, affordable housing, education, childcare, and citizen participation.

## COVID-19

JM stated that the spread of the COVID-19 has had major impact on her and her family. The virus has closed down her business, and she is conflicted on whether to send her children to school or keep them home.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

MY: An attorney practicing in family law, MY testified that domestic violence is a concern, exacerbated by the cost and limited accessibility of legal services for victims. MY testified on the obstacles to securing a restraining order, noting with concern that women of color have more barriers to securing a restraining order than white women. For example, white women are seen as victims, but domestic abuse is seen as a cultural norm for women of color. It was her experience that local Police play a pivotal role in this process while in the field responding to an incident of domestic violence, that the Police make the decision in the field whether abuse has occurred, and if the Police Officer does not decide that abuse has occurred a restraining order is not issued at that time. This is a barrier to securing a restraining order. It is also her experience that Police officers in the field lack the understanding on the definition of abuse and that without her advocacy in the field, and insistence that a judge be contacted, Police will not determine abuse has occurred and no restraining order would have been secured.

MY also testified the Police instruct victims to contact a judge in the morning to obtain a restraining order, however, victims are at high risk after contacting the Police and may be at grave danger if forced to wait for a restraining order.

MY further testified these obstacles are more present in the Town of Yarmouth and in more diverse communities. After meeting with the Police Chief in Orleans on how to lodge a complaint against an officer, she understood the process to be lengthy and ineffective, and that Police have strong immunity.

MY stated there is a need for:

1. a network of pro-bono attorneys available to advocate for victims in the field to ensure a Police Officer will act and issue the restraining order
2. a requirement that Police Officers consult with the victim's attorney or the on-call judge in determining if abuse has occurred
3. Victims of domestic violence should have a guaranteed access to a public attorney

MY noted that a parent may actually lose the custody of their children if you do not secure a restraining order or if they enter in a homeless shelter.

DT: Testified that domestic violence is a concern. Due to the inability of the justice system to effectively enforce a restraining order against her abuser, DT was forced to move away from her birthplace of Cape Cod. Her ex-partner would violate the restraining order by breaking into her home to eat and shower. DT noted it is not just the Police that fail to protect but also the courts; in

her case the judge would not issue a restraining order for the children “because he is not abusing the children, just you”. DT noted this is a problem as domestic violence impacts the entire family.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

JM: testified that she has experienced housing discrimination, and that there is a severe lack of housing inventory and affordable housing. This lack of housing inventory causes people to lose their (rental) voucher. JM identified domestic violence as a concern and a barrier to housing.

TI: TI likewise testified housing discrimination exists. While working with a realtor, she was shown only run-down places and was not shown any high-quality units even though she could afford the higher quality unit.

#### CHILDCARE

LW: Childcare is an important issue for families. Loss of childcare voucher happens due to trivial reasons. LW also noted that childcare facilities run by women of color, and facilities which serve a diverse population, experience more difficulties with respect to permitting, licensing or securing grants than other facilities.

#### EDUCATION

DT: DT testified that the local school curriculum is not culturally diverse. As a girl she experienced a feeling of not belonging, and her children while on Cape Cod “survived not thrived” in school. This is in sharp contrast, the schools in Los Angeles have diversity in their educational programs and her children thrived.

M: Testified that COVID-19 has posed a unique burden on children with special needs.

#### CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

MS: wanted to promote networking with diversity resources and groups.

NJ: NJ testified that women of color are not represented (in leadership positions) and noted women should be encouraged to join local boards and committees.

The session in English ended with all participants being encouraged to maintain their involvement with the Commission on the Status of Women, join a board or committee of their local government, complete their Census, and to vote. There was concern over the public’s confusion over voting this fall, and participants were encouraged to direct questions or concerns regarding voting to their local Town Hall.

#### **Portuguese Language Breakout Room**

Commissioners Natalia Frois and Katia Dacunha present and participant JF. (Other Portuguese-speaking registrants seemed to have trouble signing on to the Zoom meeting; we will follow up with them.)

In the Portuguese session we had one attendee, JF. She mentioned that in Brazil where she came from she was an architect. She wishes she could get her license as an architect here in USA so she could continue her profession. She mentioned that she has been very welcomed by Americans and treated well, she thinks that there is discrimination between women to women. She has experienced discrimination in commercial spaces, in stores, otherwise she has been treated well in the public sector in MA.

Through COVID19 she had to work less because her daughter's pre-school program was only approved until 3:30pm so her income dropped.

She mentioned that support for more single mothers getting an education can improve their career and financial status. Supporting single mothers through education can prevent them from falling into addiction.

The necessity to go to school to improve her income is essential to her. Having two kids and earning \$15 an hour in cleaning is not enough. It's very challenging to maintain 2 kids on a low income. Having support for single mothers to go back to school will give them an opportunity to improve their income and invest more in her children's education. The challenges to go back to school are financial support to pay for childcare and school tuition.

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### **Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women 2021 Survey Summary**

The *Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women (CCICSW)* recently conducted our second survey of challenges and needs of women on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket.

Survey responses were collected between October 2020 and March 2021 using the online survey tool *Survey Monkey*. It consisted of 18 questions – some multiple choice, some ranking an order of preference, and some open-ended.

The survey was distributed through various networks that included nonprofit organizations that serve women, government agencies in each of the 15 Cape Cod towns as well as the six towns of Martha's Vineyard and the island of Nantucket, the two federally-recognized tribal nations of Gay Head (Aquinnah) Wampanoag and Mashpee Wampanoag, churches and religious groups.

The survey was designed to assess the challenges that women are facing in our region. Here is a quick overview of the information we gathered from the survey:

- There were 454 individuals who responded, representing all 15 Cape Cod towns, the six towns of Martha’s Vineyard, and Nantucket.
- The age of respondents ranged from 18 to over 60 years old – with the majority falling between the age category of 60 and older (36%).
- Self-identifying questions showed a variety of ethnic backgrounds, marital status, sexual orientation, military service, and included parents, grandparents, and non-parents.
- Topics of concern by respondents (in order of frequency) included healthcare, mental health, affordable housing, cost of/access to medication, education/vocational training, reproductive rights, childcare, workplace challenges, and addiction.

The results of this survey will be used by CCICSW to guide advocacy, programming, and legislative priorities for the Commission over the next two years. Additionally, we are sharing the data publicly to provide information for other organizations advocating for the women and girls living on Cape Cod, Martha’s Vineyard, and Nantucket.

Notably, the results of this 2021 survey align and differ in a few key areas from our 2017 survey. Differences may reflect changes in priorities of the women of the Cape and Islands but may also be a product of updates made to the phrasing of the survey. Healthcare and housing remain as the two top priorities for women in our region. Mental health was not listed as a separate priority in the 2017 survey but was selected by 45% of respondents in the 2021 survey. Employment ranked as the third most cited priority in 2017, but employment related concerns did not rank in the top five priorities in the 2021 survey. This result is surprising given the current global pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic, but in the 2021 survey, respondents were able to narrow their concerns from ‘Employment’ to more nuanced concerns such as ‘Unemployment’ and ‘Workplace Challenge’ perhaps diluting the frequency of responses.

While the survey represents our second effort at large-scale data collection, we do recognize limitations to our survey methods. First, responses came from women with access to (and the ability to manage) technology. Second, we were not able to provide the survey in other languages but have begun to secure funding for that service in the future. Third, the COVID-19 pandemic limited the number of women we were able to reach as well as our ability for outreach to certain populations of women on Cape Cod and the Islands. In future surveys, the Commission is dedicated to soliciting responses from all women, including those with housing and financial insecurity as well as linguistically diverse populations. Our hope is to continue to expand our awareness through hearings, listening circles, and the creation of other outreach tools in order to better sample all of the women in our region.

*\*For more information regarding this annual report, please contact: CCICSWinfo@gmail.com*

# Eastern Regional Commission Annual Report

## Eastern Regional Commission on the Status of Women Annual Report June 2021

The Eastern Regional Commission on the Status of Women includes the towns of Avon, Brookline, Canton, Cohasset, Dedham, Foxborough, Holbrook, Hull, Milton, Plainville, Randolph, Sharon, Stoughton, and Westwood, and the cities of Boston, Braintree, Chelsea, Quincy, Revere, Weymouth, and Winthrop.

**Commissioners in alphabetical order:**

Margaret Adams, Soumia Aitelhaj, Dr. Kerry Akashian, Tamisha Lucien Civil, Dr. Amanda Crabb, Michelle Lanteigne, Toby Kamens Rodman

**Purpose:** The purpose of the ERCSW is to assess and advance the women and girls of Eastern Region of Massachusetts toward full equity in all areas of life and to promote rights and opportunities for all women and girls.

**Mission:** The mission of the ERCSW is to provide a permanent, effective voice for women and girls in the Eastern Region of Massachusetts.

**Meetings:** The Commission met 6 times in FY21. Commissioner Akashian, Chair provided a Commissioner's update at all meetings.

**January:** Commissioner Akashian collaborated with Christa Kelleher from UMass Boston's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy's application to the Boston Foundation's Open Door Grants program to identify and address disparities in representation in elected, appointed, and hired leadership in the Commonwealth by educating, engaging, and planning with local leaders and constituents to gather data and create a dashboard that can serve as a tool for information and advocacy. This project will assess how public leadership in the following communities reflects the demographic diversity of its residents: Boston, Brookline, Burlington, Chelsea, Everett, Lexington, Malden, Milton, Revere, and Waltham. The first step will be convening a gender-balanced advisory committee that is racially, ethnically, geographically, and linguistically representative of the region. Meeting twice yearly, advisory members will offer input on leadership roles for monitoring, community outreach mechanisms, metrics and targets, and utilization of the model in other Massachusetts communities.

**February:**

- Commissioner Adams attended a Commission meeting and heard testimony from women of color many of them, immigrants. This meeting helped lay the groundwork for a panel discussion that was going to occur in March 2021. The event will be postponed until FY22. Commissioner Akashian worked on securing honorariums or gifts for the event. Commissioner Aitelhaj advocated for including the voices of immigrant women and issues of accessibility during the pandemic and worked with Commissioner Rodman on a flier and program. Commissioner Lanteigne, Adams, and Civil worked to identify speakers.

**March:**

- Commissioner Adams presented on Commissioner Civil's "Voice of Reason" to discuss the major work of the Commission.
- Commissioner Akashian presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Connections Conference on the following topic: Building an Equity Lens to Approach Your Work. The session focused on how to develop an equity lens to be utilized in your professional and civic life. The session began with a definition of an equity lens and how it can be used to support day to day decision making. Discussion continued with different types of equity lenses. Finally, the session culminated in strategies to help develop your own equity lens. The session was for educators and students.

**May:** During Advocacy Day for the Commission, Commissioner Akashian, Adams, Crabb, and Rodman hosted The Greater Boston Breakout Room with Co-Host Commissioner Mary-dith Tuitt. The Commissioners shared resources and bills that they have actively supported.

- An Act supporting parents running for public office Many working parents are discouraged from running for public office because of financial reasons. This bill would clarify that child care expenses for times while campaigning are not considered personal expenses.
- An Act to Ensure Gender Parity and Racial and Ethnic Diversity on Public Boards and Commissions Parity on Board Coalition. This bill would promote diversity in leadership and governance that broadly reflects the demographics of our Commonwealth. The composition of each appointed public board and commission in the Commonwealth shall broadly reflect that of the general public.
- Virtual Advocacy Day Tool Kit  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dh5PPVCUR2NFO1Vk8sCYazAQJChi0XjseR8vPjefCM4/edit?usp=sharing>

**Conclusion**

During FY21 the ERCSWG met several times to work on priorities in their region, met with the leads of the other regional commissions to present ideas and to glean ideas from other commissions, and helped to advocate for the work of the main commission. In FY22 the ERCSWG will fine tune logistics, utilize social media, develop events that amplify the voices of women in their region, determine new Commissioners, and consider hosting interns. Additionally, they will collaborate with UMass Boston's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy as needed and other community partners.

Respectfully Submitted by Commissioner Kerry Akashian, Chair of Eastern Regional Commission on Women and the Status of Girls

# Essex Regional Commission Annual Report



## ESSEX COUNTY COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

### ANNUAL REPORT 2020

#### **Mission**

On August 3, 2010, former Governor Deval Patrick signed legislation establishing the Essex County Commission on the Status of Women (ECCSW) to advance the women of Essex County towards full equality in all areas of life and to promote women's rights and responsibilities. The goal of the Essex County Commission on the Status of Women is to uplift the voices of diverse women of Essex County and advocate for the health, safety, well-being, and economic advancement of women through community outreach, legislative advocacy, community hearings, and community education. We value equity, inclusion, and the leadership of women in all areas that impact their lives.

### **Commissioners**

Ogor Winnie Okoye, *Saugus ECCSW Chair*

Sandy Almonte, *Lawrence ECCSW Vice Chair*

Geetha Rao Ramani, *Andover ECCSW Secretary*

Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken, *Gloucester*

Michaela Dunn, *Amesbury*

Katrina Jagroop Gomes, *Haverhill*

Brianna Sullivan, *Newburyport*

Sara Stanley, *Rowley*

Nicole McClain, *Lynn*

### Emeritus/Advisory Commissioners

Paula Gomez Stordy, *Middleton*

### **Goals**

In 2020, due to the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to cancel all in-person meetings (we had previously met in person at the Middleton Library) and events and continued our monthly meeting via Zoom every second Thursday of the month between 6:00pm to 7:00PM. ECCSW's initial goals in 2020 included appointing new members to the Commission to fill in the three empty seats at the commission and focusing on our initial legislative priorities from 2019-2020 which included the following: An Act Supporting Working Parents Who Chose to Run for Public Office(S.475); An Act Ensuring Gender Parity on Public Boards and Commission (S.2077); An Act to Require Sexual Harrasment

Trianing (S.1057/H.1345); and An Avtto End Child Marriage in Massachusetts (S.24/H.1478). However, in the wake of the Covid-19 Pandemic shutdown, we had to quickly pivot away from our initial agenda in order to meet the most pressing needs of the women and girls in Essex County in line with our mission. mission.

### **Accomplishments in 2020-2021**

#### **Appointment of New Commissioners**

In 2020, four commissioners, Katrina Jagroop-Gomes, Sara Stanley, Brianna Sullivan, and Nicole McClain were appointed to the commission. Each of these women has proven to be an enormous asset to the Commission, bringing fresh ideas, knowledge of systems and connections for outreach to the commission. We are thrilled to welcome these impressive women and look forward to seeing all the ways in which they will undoubtedly continue to contribute to and fulfill our mission.

#### **Meeting our Mission During a Global Pandemic**

We pivoted to engaging with the women and girls in Essex County through social media instead of in person. During this Covid-19 pandemic shut-down, while our communities adhered to social distancing, survivors of intimate partner violence were further exposed to the risk of violence as they were isolated from the public and forced to isolate with their abusive partners. With the escalation in reports of intimate partner violence, the Essex County Commission on the Status of Women decided to respond in real time to this crisis by assembling a group of professionals and leaders in the county and hosted a virtual panel titled, "Navigating the Scourge of Domestic Violence During the Covid-19 Pandemic". The panel featured Leadership of domestic violence programs within Essex County including:

fellow Essex County commissioner, Director of Lawrence Police Community Relations, and founder of the domestic violence program Delamano, Sandy Almonte, Executive Director of Healing Abuse Working for Change, Sara Stanley, (who is now one of our commissioners); Executive Director of The Jeannie Geiger Crisis Center, Suzanne Dubus, and Arelis Huerta of the YWCA Northern Massachusetts who is also the Director of Community Based Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence Program Operations.

Addressing the scourge of domestic violence aligns with the commission's priorities, missions and goals as domestic violence impacts the safety, health, economic stability, and advancement of women who are primarily survivors of domestic violence and their children who are also impacted by witnessing and experiencing abuse in the home. The virtual panel was a live streamed event via Facebook on Thursday May 28, 2020. Panelists described the dynamics of domestic violence, the impact of abuse and addressed strategies to help friends, families as well as acquaintances. Most importantly, the panel provided information on resources available to such survivors within Essex county as well as throughout the state and beyond. Individuals engaged by asking questions of the panelist. This was a successful event that reached more people than we could have ever reached in person. To date, the video of this virtual panel presentation has reached over three thousand one hundred and twenty two people (3,122) people and has received eight hundred and thirty five (835) engagements on Facebook. Because social media has a wide reach outside of Essex County, we followed up by posting statewide and national domestic violence hotlines. Following this virtual panel, we received positive feedback and some included inquiries about hosting the presentation in Spanish. We hope to schedule a panel discussion with the bilingual panelist in the near future.

To build off this event and in conjunction with the National Domestic Violence Awareness month in October, coupled with a recognition of the escalation of incidents of domestic violence during the Covid-19 pandemic, we organized and held two (2) more Facebook-live events on the topic of “Tapping Legal Resources for Immigrant Victims of Domestic Violence.” The first event was in English and was held on October 14, 2020. Panelists included four seasoned legal professionals; whose areas of specialties were in both domestic violence as well as the legal options available to victims of such violence under immigration law. This event was especially aimed at immigrant and undocumented women in Essex County who may be victims of intimate partner violence or other crimes and who are mostly afraid to report such incidents to the police mostly because of their immigration status which may or may not be tied to their abusers. This aligns with the mission of the commission in advancing “all” women in Essex County towards full equity in all areas of their lives, especially in the areas of health, safety, wellbeing, and economic advancement.

Attorney Nicole Merida, a staff attorney from HAWC (Healing Abuse Working for Change); Attorney Nina Froes of the Nina Fries Law Office, Attorney Nicole Merida of Law Offices of Nicole Merida; and our Chairperson, Attorney Ogor Winnie Okoye, of the Bos Legal Group, LLC, were the outstanding panelists for the English version of the webinar. These seasoned panelists shared their insights on the meaning of domestic violence, as well as the legal options and resources available to those victims of domestic violence who are mostly women and whose circumstances were more dire due to their immigration status or lack thereof. The panel delved deeper into the different types of immigration options available under the U.S immigration law to those women who are allowed as victims of crimes and/or

abuse, to self-petition in order to gain legal status in the United States, instead of relying on their abusers for their legal status. This event received overwhelming positive reviews from the public. To date, the video of this virtual event has reached over 2,929 people and received 1,500 engagements, prompting the Commission to organize a second event in Spanish, which was held on October 28, 2020 which also has in a couple of days, received a record reach and engagement of 1458 people and 888 engagement. The panelists for this second Spanish event were, Attorney Luanne Santelises of the Santelises Law Offices, Attorney Zoila Marisol Gomez, a managing partner at Gomez and Palumbo Law Offices and Attorney Joseph Molina from the Molina Flynn Law Offices.

The Essex County Commission ended 2020 by organizing a self-care workshop that sought to address the escalation in mental health issues mostly brought about due to an extremely challenging year. The topic of the presentation on December 9, 2020 was, "Self Care During the Covid-pandemic". Women and girls in Essex have been juggling a lot and the Commission thought it expedient to organize this workshop that would provide helpful tips to weather the mental and emotional toll the pandemic had taken on people. Elizabeth Delgado from Colectiva presented the workshop which was very well received gauging by the Facebook engagement and positive feedback received. The presentation had received over 750 views and engagements on Facebook. This aligns with the mission of our commission in advancing the health, wellness and safety of women and girls in Essex County.

Following this end of year event, the Essex County Commission on the Status of Women decided to conduct a survey of the girls and women in Essex county with the goal of finding

out what their most pressing needs and issues were in the wake of an extremely grueling pandemic year. The goal of this exercise was to have the results of this survey inform our legislative priorities for 2021. What was obvious was that the Covid-19 pandemic amplified the economic, racial and social inequities in the system which unfortunately affected mostly women and women of color in disproportionate ways. While we were planning this survey we organized and assembled a panel of black and minority leaders within Essex county for Black History Month. In addition to the pandemic, 2020 was also a year of racial reckoning in the United States and issues around racial justice were front and center prompting the commission to organize an event on the topic of racial justice which especially impacted women and girls of color. The Panelist included Eunice Delice Zeigler, East District City Councilor for Methuen, Adriana Paz who is the founder of Mutual Aid Lynn and the Vice President of the Northshore Juneteenth Association and Faustina Cuevas who is a DEI trainer and an educator. Commissioner Nicole McClain was the moderator for this event. On February 26, 2021, the panel presented on the topic of Racial Justice in 2021; a tale of hope or hopelessness. This event was extremely well received and opened up a space for conversations around issues of racial justice and equity. The event had over 747 views and engagements on Facebook and offered space for minority women and girls within the county to express their views and allies alike.

### **The Essex County Community Survey Report**

The Essex County Commission on the Status of Women (ECCSW, Commission) conducted a survey directed to the women and young girls of Essex County to gain an understanding of their priorities and concerns to better determine the Commission's 2021 legislative objectives, further facilitation of coalition partners and focus groups for ECCSW.

The top five concerns in Essex County include childcare needs, housing, equal pay/economic justice, racial justice, and employment.

## METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted between February and April 2021 and offered in three languages, English, Spanish and Portuguese, to extend the outreach in Essex county. The survey was distributed using the ECCSW’s social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram. Members of the Commission also shared the survey on their respective social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or LinkedIn.

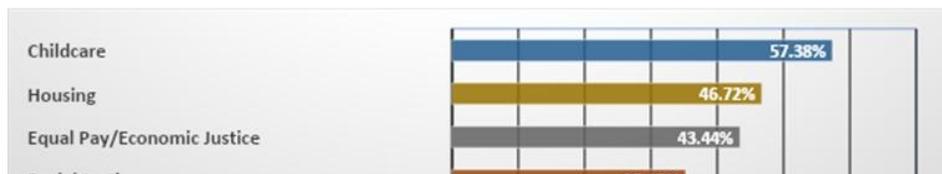
The main sections covered in this geographic, social survey included:

- Demographics
- Psychographics
- Behavioral
- Needs-Based

## RESULTS AND KEY FINDINGS

The seven-question survey included one quantitative and six qualitative questions. Three of the qualitative questions allowed for multiple selections, the other three were open-ended, and the quantitative question was multiple-choice. There were a total of 122 respondents, of which 121 were English and 1 Spanish. Analysis of the open-ended questions; five, six, and seven are summarized based on respondents’ keywords; the complete raw data responses are available upon request for further research analysis.

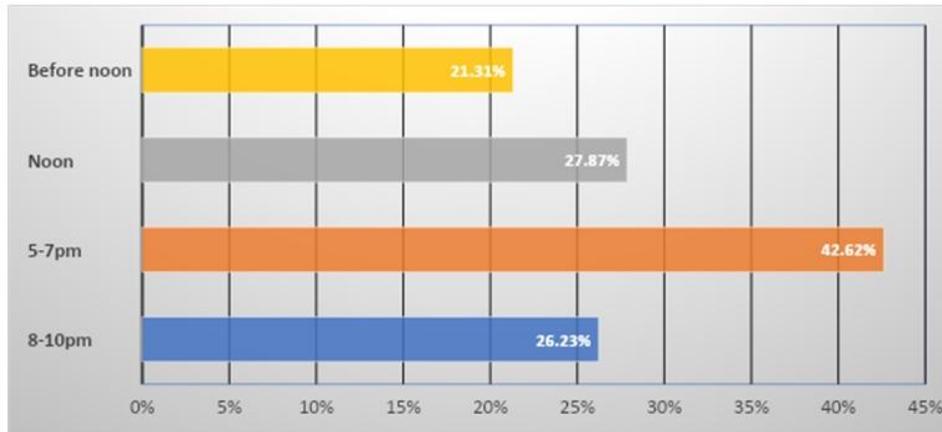
### **Q1. What do you believe is the most pressing issue impacting women and girls in Essex County?**



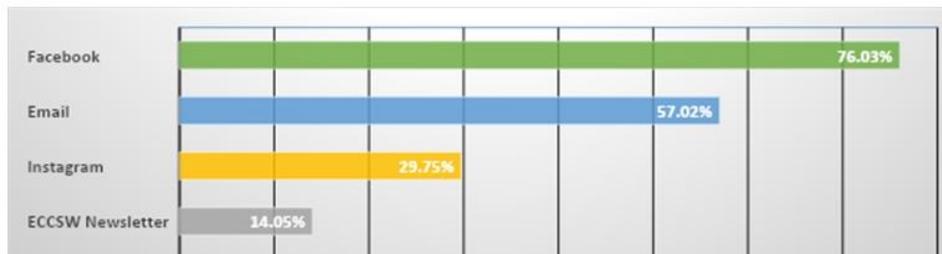
**Q2. What is your age range?**

| Age Range    | RESPONSES  | RESPONSE % |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Under 18     | 1          | 0.82%      |
| 18-24        | 5          | 4.10%      |
| 25-34        | 21         | 17.21%     |
| 35-44        | 39         | 31.97%     |
| 45-54        | 35         | 28.69%     |
| 55-64        | 14         | 11.48%     |
| 65+          | 7          | 5.74%      |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>122</b> |            |

**Q3. What time of day would you be available for a virtual webinar?**



**Q4. Which forum would best engage you? Select all that apply.**



**Q5. How has the pandemic impacted you?**

| <b>Keyword(s)</b>                                 | <b>Responses</b> |
|---|------------------|
| Remote Work/Learning                              | 42               |
| Mentally  | 19               |
| Childcare   | 15               |
| Financially                                       | 15               |
| Loss of Employment/Income/Difficulty finding work | 8                |
| Loss of Family/Friend                             | 3                |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                      | <b>102</b>       |

**Q6. Which of your personal strengths has been helpful to you during the pandemic in creating positive solutions?**

| <b>Keyword(s)</b>            | <b>Responses</b> |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Optimism/Positivity/Humor    | 17               |
| Adaptability/Flexibility     | 13               |
| Resiliency                   | 11               |
| Helping Others               | 9                |
| Time Management/Organization | 8                |
| Patience                     | 8                |
| Creativity                   | 7                |
| Spirituality/Faith           | 7                |
| Resourceful                  | 4                |
| Family/Friend Support        | 2                |
| Communication                | 1                |
| Education                    | 1                |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>88</b>        |

**Q7. Please include any additional feedback or concerns you wish to share with the Essex County Commission on the Status of Women.**

| <b>Keyword(s)</b>    | <b>Responses</b> |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Childcare/Affordable | 10               |
| Mental Health        | 9                |
| Education            | 5                |
| Housing              | 5                |

|                     |           |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Employment          | 5         |
| Race/Racial Issues  | 5         |
| Domestic Violence   | 4         |
| Equal Pay           | 3         |
| Networking          | 3         |
| Parent/Other care   | 3         |
| Funding for Schools | 2         |
| Food Delivery       | 1         |
| Women Empowerment   | 1         |
| Youth Involvement   | 1         |
| Schools Reopening   | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>58</b> |

Following our survey, the ECCSW adopted the following legislative priorities in light of what the women and girls in Essex County noted were areas of their most pressing needs:

**ECCSW Priority Legislation**

1. *The Common Start Bill (H.605/S.362)*

Lead Sponsors: Kenneth Gordon, Adrian C. Madaro, et. al

Status: 3/29/2021: House referred bill to the Joint Committee on Education and Senate

Concurred.

Proposed bill will make high quality early education and child-care available and affordable for all Massachusetts families. Ensure affordability for individual families, public funding for providers to cover actual costs of high-quality care; and increase compensation and professional development opportunities for educators.

2. *Act Requiring One Fair Wage (S.1213)*

Lead Sponsors: Sen. Patricia Jehlen and Rep. Tricia Farley-Bouvier

Status: 3/29/2021; Senate referred bill to the Committee on Labor and Workforce

3/29/2021: House concurred.

The proposed bill would raise the tipped wage gradually over the next seven years until all workers are paid one fair minimum wage. In doing so, it would bring thousands of workers out of poverty, reduce sexual harassment in the workplace, decrease the wage gap between male and female tipped workers, and align Massachusetts with seven other states.

Coalition: One Fair Wage Coalition – led by ROC and Jobs with Justice

3. *I AM Bill (An Act to Increase Access to Disposable Menstrual Products in Prisons, Homeless Shelters, and Public Schools (S.1445)*

Lead Sponsors: Sen. Patricia D. Jehlen and Reps. Jay Livingstone and Christine Barber

(Status: 5/21/2021: Joint Hearing scheduled for 6/7/2021)

Coalition: I AM. Coalition – led by Mass NOW.

4. An Act to Ensure Gender Parity and Racial and Ethnic Diversity on Public Boards and Commissions (S. 2077)

Presenter: Jason M. Lewis, Patricia A. Haddad

Status: 3/29/2021; House concurred.

This legislation would require that 400+ public boards and commissions in MA have gender parity and be ethnically reflective of the communities that they are representing. The bill includes language specifically advancing the public leadership of women of color in the Commonwealth.

5. An Act relative to Work and Family Mobility During and Subsequent to the Covid 19 Emergency (S.2289)

Presenter: Brendan P. Crighton;

Status: House concurred, 3/29/2021;

5/28/2020 scheduled for a virtual hearing (joint session) on 6/23/21 at 2:00pm.

This bill would enable all qualified state residents to apply for a standard driver's license, regardless of their immigration status, while keeping our Commonwealth in full compliance with the REAL ID requirements.

6. An Act Supporting Working Parents Who Choose to Run for Public Office (S.475)

Lead Sponsors: Sen. Patricia Jehlen and Reps. Mike Connolly and Joan Meschino

(Status: House concurred 3/29/2021)

Many working parents are discouraged from running for public office because of financial reasons. This bill would clarify that childcare expenses for times while campaigning are not considered personal expenses.

Coalition: Campaign Funds for Child Care Coalition – led by MCSW

MCSW Collaboration

The ECCSW is extremely grateful for the increased and ongoing collaboration with the MCSW. The MCSW Commissioner liaison to the ECCSW, Penny Blaisdell, continues to be an *extraordinary* asset to our Commission, and we are grateful for the productive efforts of the new Regional Outreach Coordinator as well.

**Collaboration with Lawmakers in Essex County**

The Commission hoped to foster a closer relationship with the legislators in Essex County in line with its mission of surveying, reviewing and reporting on the status of women in Essex County with the ultimate goal of collaborating with the lawmakers and advising on the effects of proposed legislation on women and recommending policies to them. Some state legislators like Senator Joan Lovely and Christine Minicucci reached out to the Commission in order to foster a closer collaboration with the Commission. Their invaluable insights and advocacy for the Commission's priority legislations have been tremendously helpful. On June 21, 2021 the Essex County Commission hosted a legislative meet and greet with 5 state reps, their 6 staff and 2 senators, Senators Lovely and Tarr in attendance. There were 20 lawmakers including aides that attended the legislative meet and greet. It was a great opportunity for the commission to share their accomplishments, visions and the result of their recent survey of the most pressing issue and challenges facing women and girls in Essex County as well as the list of the Commission priority legislation for 2021-2022. This event was hosted via zoom and achieved the dual objective of introducing the lawmakers with the Commission and also a recognition that most of the legislators were already fighting for these legislative priorities and the ones that were not already signed on to the Commission's legislative priorities were inspired by the results of the survey. This event was a tremendous success given the feedback, support and insights that both the commission and the lawmakers provided.

### Conclusions and 2021 Goals

Although the world is beginning to open up, our communities continue to be impacted by the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, childcare, housing insecurity, racial unrest, etc. Women and girls in our community, especially women of color, continue to struggle with loss of employment, caring for loved ones impacted by COVID19, caring for their children while they are learning remotely, and trying to adjust to the other demands of our changing times. The Commission plans to host more events via Zoom and facebook live until the COVID restrictions are lifted. The commission plans to begin a series of live educational videos called the "Educate and Advocate Series" that would educate women and girls in the community about pending legislation, self care, financial literacy and other topics that affect women in our community. Our commission also has plans to begin an internship and advocacy program for teen girls. This program will be named in the coming months and is detailed below:

#### Description of Teen Internship and Advocacy Program:

The Teen Internship and Advocacy Program is an affiliation of Essex County's young women and girls representing the future of women's leadership and equality. The goal of the organization is to allow young female leaders to be mentored by current Commissioners and for the young members to advise the Commissioners in turn on the issues and topics they believe their communities face.

As an extension of the Essex County Commission of the Status of Women, the program members shall include young women and girls, with an age bracket to be determined, representing the diverse communities that comprise Essex County. Each member, like each Commissioner, shall have the opportunity to serve two terms. The members will meet regularly alone and with the Commission to identify active concerns and discuss plans of actions.

#### Expected Roles and Responsibilities:

Advise and guide Commissioners in their efforts to better represent our youngest constituents

Participate in a one-on-one mentorship program with a designated Commissioner

Designate representatives to attend regular Commission Meetings to report on their work

Assist the commissioners with their regular administrative roles (i.e. data collection, networking, social media outreach and the facilitation of forums/panel discussions, legislative outreach, etc.)

Meet at least once monthly via Zoom to engage in meaningful discussion, agenda setting and to identify ways in which they can help us to raise awareness and advance legislation in line with the mission of our organization

Engage in outreach with schools, girls' organizations, and clubs in Essex County to build a network of young, empowered women across the region

# Hampden County Commission Annual Report



## Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

### ANNUAL REPORT June 2020

Gabrielle Jackson  
Jacqueline Velez  
Shanique Spalding

Patricia Hallberg  
Jennifer Metsch  
Izzy Ortiz

Tara Marshall  
Dawn DiStefano  
Michelle Goncalves

#### **Members:**

Gabrielle Jackson - Springfield  
Tara Marshall - Agawam  
Patricia Hallberg—Wilbraham  
Jennifer Metsch—Longmeadow  
Jacqueline Velez - Springfield  
Michelle Goncalves—Ludlow  
Shanique Spaulding—Springfield  
Izzy Ortiz - Springfield  
Dawn DiStefano - West Springfield

#### **Elected Officers:**

Gabrielle Jackson—Chair  
Patricia Hallberg—Vice Chair  
Tara Marshall —Secretary

#### **Purpose**

On April 25, 2017, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women inaugurated nine new commissioners to a newly formed regional commission created to study and report on the status of women and girls in the twenty-three towns and cities that make up Hampden County, Western Massachusetts. "The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women is a state-established body charged with reviewing the status of women in Massachusetts and offering recommendations regarding policy that would improve access to opportunities and equality." Taking from the brief provided, the Regional Commissions: "Modeled after the MCSW, the...unfunded county and regional women's commissions were legislatively created to study and report on the status of women and girls in their geographical areas, and to provide permanent and effective voices for women and girls. Each county and regional commission reports their findings annually to MCSW."

#### **Membership**

At the June 14, 2018 meeting, the HCCSWG voted for three (3) elected officers at which time the following assignments were accepted - Dawn Forbes DiStefano, Chair; Shanique Spalding, Vice Chair;

Michelle Goncalves, Secretary. In January 2019, the Commission inaugurated three new officers including; Gabrielle Jackson; Tara Marshall and Lizzy Ortiz. In June 2020, the Commission elected new leadership, including Gabrielle Jackson as Chair and Tara Marshall as Secretary. In January 2021, the Commission welcomed their newest sister Commissioner Jacqueline Velez of Springfield.

### **Accomplishments**

The HCCSWG Commission has successfully completed a diverse and meaningful list of accomplishments between January 2020 and May 2021, against all odds and during unprecedented circumstances. We met our goal of increasing a social media presence through the promotion of community events and sharing of information important to women and girls in our community. We accomplished this task through mindful planning of Facebook posts that generated increased interest and engagement with Hampden County residents. One of the most promising events we launched were our reoccurring "Coffee Chats," in which Commissioners would host virtual spaces to speak with constituents across the county regarding issues that matter the most to them. Most Coffee Chats were centered around a particular issue. In addition, the Commission identified various community partners to attend as guest speakers leading to increased awareness and understanding of issues and challenges of women and girls in Hampden County as well as local solutions and ideas for partnership. During Women's History Month in March 2021, the Commission hosted a "Women Breaking Barriers" event, which featured powerful women across various industries in Hampden County who were able to break barriers in their area of expertise. In addition, we were featured on Senator Eric Lesser's Lunchtime Livestream, where we discussed issues, legislation and the implications of COVID that are related to Women's History.

### **COMMUNITY EVENTS**

Coffee Chat Series (2020)

Women Breaking Barriers (2021)

Senator Lesser's Lunchtime Livestream (2021)

HCCSWG Commissioners also invited a series of women who lead in our community to serve as featured guests and present important information to our constituents during our monthly Public Meetings.

### **PUBLIC MEETING FEATURED GUESTS**

September 2020 - Elizabeth Dineen, Executive Director of YWCA of Western Mass

October 2020 - Maria Bedard, VP of Early Education and Care from Square One

November 2020 - Leaders from The Women's Fund of Western Mass - Young Women's Initiative

December 2020 - Lakisha Coppedge, Founder & Principal of Coppedge Consulting and Student Liaison/Advisor in the Early Childhood Education Department at Springfield Technical Community College

January 2021 - Ami Jackson, staff Criminal Defense Investigator for the Springfield Office of the Youth Advocacy Department

February 2021 -Erika Slocumb, Doctoral Candidate of Black Studies and Public History, UMASS Amherst

March 2021 - Michele Equale, Head of End to End Process Owner Program

April 2021 - Dr. Neena Qasba, obstetrician-gynecologist University of Massachusetts Medical School-Baystate

May 2021 - Shaitia Spruell, Program Manager, Office of the Mass State Treasurer and Receiver

June 2021 - Jynai McDonald, Family Childcare Coordinator, SEIU Local 509

### **HCCSWG GRANT REQUEST**

The HCCSWG submitted a request for grant funding from the MA Commission in the amount of \$2,500. We plan to use the funding to purchase a web domain and site, create our own marketing materials and

use the funding to provide appetizers for future in-person guests once COVID regulations lift. Our topics for consideration and advocacy include Healthcare, Education, Workplace Challenges and Sexual Assault - a reflection of our public meetings and events with Elected Leaders.

**Conclusion**

The Hampden County Commission is quite proud of our work during the past year. We have worked diligently to engage with our community, participate in local initiatives, coordinate opportunities for public hearings and collect information to guide our efforts. We plan to build on our success this year and will implement a public hearing, community survey and legislative breakfast next year as well as continue with our featured speaker series and coffee chats. We also plan to encourage our community members to attend monthly meetings and volunteer to engage in advocacy and community engagement efforts in partnership with Commissioners.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gabrielle Jackson

Chair

The Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

# Hampshire-Franklin Regional Commission Annual Report



## **Executive Board**

Bonnie MacCracken, Chair  
Marcia Plant Jackson  
Vice Chair  
Laura Sylvester, Treasurer  
Victoria Cliche, Clerk

## **Commissioners**

Francia Wisnewski



## **Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls**

### **Annual Report (2020-2021)**

***"It always feels nice to be associated with a team  
you share a great bond with." (Anushka Shetty)***

Over the course of the 2020-2021 year, the Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls (HFCSWG) continued to work within their district expanding the public discussion of gender-based inequality in Western Massachusetts. This Annual Report (covering the period of July 1, 2020 to May 1, 2021) highlights who we are and our many accomplishments.

#### **Mission:**

The purpose of the Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls (HFCSWG) shall be to advance women and girls toward full equity in all areas of life and to promote the rights and opportunities for all women and girls. The mission of the Commission on the Status of Women and Girls is to amplify the voices of women and girls (being all those who self-identify as such, regardless of the gender they were designated at birth) across Hampshire-Franklin Counties that facilitates and fosters community, inclusiveness, and well-being for women and girls. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the full enjoyment of life for all women and girls across all lifespans.

#### **Goals for 2021-2022 Fiscal Year are:**

The goals we set for ourselves, each year, are defined by our mission statement. We continually strive and set goals to amplify the voices of women and girls in our district. This year, our goals are:

- Improve our reach by
  - Compiling a mailing list to allow for better and directed communications.
  - Publishing and emailing a newsletter.
- Recruit new members to increase the number of commissioners.
- Build stronger local partnerships.
- Continually strive for ways to create a sense of culture and ways for promoting the rights and opportunities for all women and girls, both virtually and through in person events, as we begin to phase into a post-pandemic period.



## Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

### From the Chair and Vice Chair:

The fiscal year-end represents a time of both transition and reflection for the Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls (HFCSWG). In pre-pandemic years, the HFCSWG gathered each June for a year-end celebratory annual meeting. Together we would reflect on our accomplishments, grow our sisterhood, and transition into our next fiscal year by electing new officers. A time for “breaking bread” together and recommitting ourselves to our core priority of amplifying the voices of women and girls in our district.

Even with the pandemic cutting off the commission from in person meetings and community events, we have persevered. Our commitment to our mission and perseverance to move forward has come with many obstacles, losses, and also successes which could even be described as both the “worst of times and the best of times.”

Learning how to communicate virtually, was our biggest obstacle. The personal separation, of not having time together to bond in our roles as commissioners over food, stories, and hugs, including feeling this same loss in our professional and family lives, hindered our ability to communicate virtually and to move forward. However, these losses, and the stress, created by both the pandemic and emotional exhaustion from non-stop virtual interactions for work and education, even for medical care, and caring for our families took its toll. The biggest toll was the loss of participation of several HFCSWG members for a variety of reasons.

We persevered, by welcoming two new commissioners and holding mid-year elections. It is still hard to fathom that this new group of five commissioners has never sat together in the same room. These two new commissioners have brought new energy, a wealth of knowledge, and enthusiasm. The nature and style of our meetings have also changed to collaborative interactive events with guests who share important new developments legislatively and programmatically.

Together we have successfully achieved our goal of determining ways to continually create a sense of culture and ways for promoting the rights and opportunities for all women and girls amid this period of social/physical distancing. We achieved this by changing our meeting formats to collaborative virtual events with guests who share important new developments legislatively and programmatically. With this change, we have brought many new faces and partners to our meetings. We have figured out ways to make an impact virtually, even in quarantine, and being physically distanced away from each other in our homes and offices in four separate communities and two counties.



## Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

We kicked off our first collaborative virtual event, fondly referred to as our “Check-In & Chat “:

- In February, we hosted five State Representatives: Natalie Blais, of the First Franklin, Mindy Domb, of the Third Hampshire, Dan Carey, of the Second Hampshire, Jake Oliveira, of the Seventh Hampden, and Lindsay Sabadosa, of the First Hampshire, focusing on legislative priorities in support of women and girls.
- In March, the topic for our second “Check-In Chat” was on the Massachusetts Family Paid Family Leave Act, co-presented by Diana Marie Painter, a Commissioner from the Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women and Alex Risley Schroeder, Essentials for Childhood. This event was co-hosted with both the Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women and the Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.
- During our most recent Check-In & Chat on Money, we hosted a panel discussion, and our guest speaker was State Treasurer and Receiver General Deborah Goldberg. Denella Clark, Chairwoman of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, with assistance from Commissioner Shaitia Spruell, gave an overview of the commission’s priority legislation. With this annual report you will find the PowerPoint presentation prepared by Jessica Atwood, of the Franklin Regional Council of Government. Jessica’s presentation provides a snapshot of data on how the pandemic is affecting women in the Hampshire-Franklin Region. In addition, we had guests, Clare Higgins, Executive Director of Community Action Pioneer Valley, Margaret Tantillo, Executive Director, Dress for Success and Andrea Chesnes, President and Founder of Root Studio, Inc.

Through the use of Zoom and social media, the HFCSWG is building a library of public service programming and resources that will be beneficial and accessible by women and girls, as needed, in their journeys towards full equity. The HFCSWG is also beginning to feel, pandemic or not, that we are making a positive impact in our community and have reached the ‘best of times’ phase of the commission’s history.

Be well, be safe.

Respectfully submitted by,

*Bonnie Mac Cracken, Chair and*

*Marcia Plant Jackson, Vice Chair*

Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls  
May 10, 2021



## Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

### Meet the HFCSWG Commissioners:

VICTORIA CLICHE, Clerk

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Victoria Cliche is an Organizational Development professional responsible for change management initiatives in the Corporate FinTech and Non-Profit sectors with a focus on equipping organizations and individuals to overcome challenges and achieve shared goals. Her career encompasses executive leadership roles in corporate Global Training, Marketing, Executive Coaching and Management Development. While attending the Stern Business School at NYU, the Association of Internal Management Consultants awarded her the “Management Consulting award for research on Best Practices of Internal Management Consultants.”

As President and CEO of a non-profit focused on the research and teaching of the Creative Problem-Solving Method (underlying most “innovation” processes used today), she oversaw and worked directly on the CEF Youthwise initiative for underserved South African high school students, conducted an annual global conference and coordinated the publication of the research-based *Journal of Creative Behavior*. As an adjunct professor, she taught an undergraduate accredited communications course at Polytechnic University in Brooklyn. She is a certified Goldratt Institute Jonah, a trained Mediator and holds several assessment instrument certifications.

Victoria has worked as a volunteer facilitator of trauma processing sessions and provided workshops for the Community Action: Community Crisis Response Team in Greenfield, MA and facilitated a youth training program in Newtown, CT under the auspices of Yale University and the 12.14 Foundation working to “instill grit and resilience through character development” for (then traumatized) youth. She served on both the Leverett Conservation and Community Preservation commissions for a decade, and was voted as a Town delegate to multiple state Democratic conventions. She is also an advocate for students and adults on the Autistic Spectrum.

Victoria is happily married to Robert Cliche and the proud mother of two sons currently attending college. She looks forward to the HFCSWG increasing its membership, connecting legislators and constituents, and broadening ways in which it collaborates with other Regional Commissions and local resources to leverage information and resources, reach more residents, and improve the lives of women and girls in Western, MA.



## Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

### MARCIA PLANT JACKSON, Vice Chair

### FRANKLIN COUNTY

Marcia Plant Jackson moved to Leverett in the Pioneer Valley in 2014. She is one of the original Commissioners of the Hampshire Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls. She is a Family Nurse Practitioner, and throughout her career she has focused her practice on underserved families. She participates locally addressing the need for accessible healthcare for all and supports Medicare For All.

During the pandemic, Marcia worked doing telemedicine for the JP Musante Health Center in Amherst, a federally qualified health center. Working through all of the phases of the Covid epidemic, starting from a time when diagnostic testing was not even available, through the phases of diagnosing, developing protocols for obtaining testing and care and for managing clinical illness when possible, at home. Now she is engaged as a volunteer on the front line, giving as many Covid vaccines as she can. The pandemic has drawn us all into a strong sense of community, with local government entities, not for profits, religious groups, advocacy groups. Through the Commission we have as a group explored the impacts on women and families of this world changing experience. An experience that all of our lives have revolved around.

### BONNIE MacCRACKEN, Chair

### HAMPSHIRE COUNTY

Bonnie MacCracken, Chair, and inaugural member of the Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls (HFCSWG), brings to the commission her entrepreneurship and organizational leadership skills. Her organizational leadership skills were honed during her own campaigns, assisting other political candidates, and while attending the Women's Campaign School at Yale and the Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts Leadership Institute for Political and Public Impact (LIPPI).

She has dedicated over 12 years to public service and leadership on issues of housing insecurity, foreclosures, and on community nonprofit boards. In 2012, Bonnie took the initiative to draft and successfully lobby for an amendment to the Massachusetts Homestead Act to protect deployed Massachusetts servicemembers from the foreclosure of their homes. This amendment passed under the Valor Act of 2012.

Bonnie has served on the executive committee of the HFCSWG for almost four years, one term as treasurer and two and half terms as the chair. As chair, her goals were to increase the commissions visibility and programming.



## Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

Recently, she began closing her thirty-year land title research firm as she transitions into her new career working in the Realty Management Division of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. At work, she was recognized for her “can do” attitude, by her colleagues, with a Values in Action Award. Bonnie resides in Amherst with her family.

### LAURA SYLVESTER, Treasurer

### FRANKLIN COUNTY

Laura Sylvester, MPPA/MPH is the Public Policy Manager for The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. She works with elected officials at the state and federal level on food policy-related issues such as SNAP, HIP, college hunger, the Cliff Effect, and MEFAP/TEFAP. She sits on multiple regional and statewide committees and coalitions working on creative cross-sector solutions to our most pressing social problems. Before coming to the Food Bank, she worked to pass the Massachusetts Pregnant Workers Fairness Act and as an ethnographer at Caring Health Center in Springfield, analyzing housing and social service policies and their effect on homelessness. Laura completed the yearlong Leadership for Public and Political Impact training offered by the Women’s Fund of Western Massachusetts in 2013. Since then she has been on a mission to encourage women to run for office and take on leadership roles. She has served a delegate to the MA State Democratic Convention since 2016. She is a seasoned policy and communications professional who has also worked as a journalist, editor, and in marketing. She lives in Shutesbury with her husband and is the proud mom of two children now in their 20s.

### FRANCIA WISNEWSKI, Commissioner

### FRANKLIN COUNTY

Francia Wisniewski, an immigrant who grew up in Cali, Colombia, and a twenty-year resident of Franklin County. Francia holds a bachelor’s degree in teaching sciences from Universidad Del Valle in Cali, Colombia and a master’s degree in Education from the University of Massachusetts. She has been a tireless advocate for children, families, women, and individuals. Since January of 2021 she has been working as the Director of the National Early Educator Training Center of the SEIU- ESF, an organization that focuses in providing education and training programs that empower workers, raise standards, and promote high quality jobs in the family childcare sector. She has worked for local nonprofit anti-poverty organizations throughout the years, and she continues to volunteer her services in various community initiatives, especially amplifying the voices of women and girls.

Francia is serving in her second term and was our first Chair who supported the establishment of our regional commission. During her tenure as chair, she led the process of writing our bylaws, supervised, and collaborated with our first intern, producing our first resource guide that identifies organizations in the region that



## Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

supports women and girls. With her ability to network and skills to be a connector, she has participated in legislative breakfasts, local chamber of commerce breakfast and represented the commission as a speaker during two consecutive Advocacy Days sponsored by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW) and recently in virtual series hosted by our regional Commission with the purpose on informing and engaging our legislators, local and statewide constituencies.

In November of 2019, Commissioner Wisniewski was nominated by both her legislator and her Senator as one of local advocates with the Latin X Excellence in the Hill, this award was presented at the State House, supported by Speaker DeLeo and Senator Spilka. The event was sponsored by the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus and recognized local leadership of black and Latinx individuals to better policies in the commonwealth.

Francia carries other critical leadership positions and is representing the community as an elected town meeting member, Montague Finance Committee Member. She also serves on the boards of the SHEA Theater and Leadership Pioneer Valley. Before moving to Montague, she served two terms on the City Greenfield's School Committee, including two terms as Vice-Chair. Francia is an accomplished ultra-running in support of local philanthropy.

###

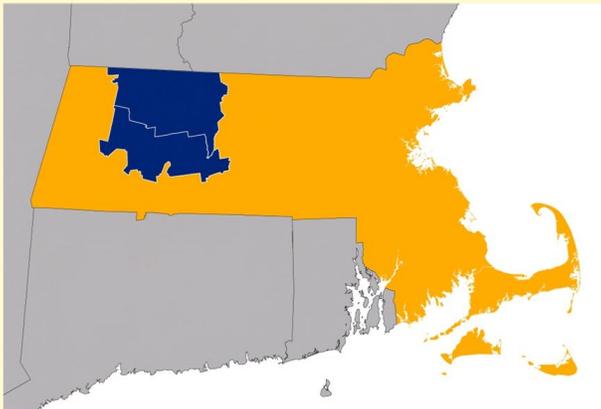
# FRANKLIN-HAMPSHIRE DATA SNAPSHOT

Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women

April 27, 2021

Presentation prepared by Jessica Atwood, Franklin Regional  
Council of Governments

## DATA SNAPSHOT



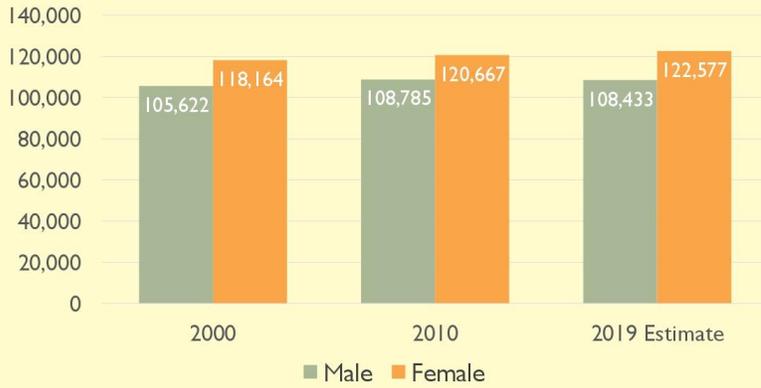
Pre-pandemic profile of women  
in Franklin and Hampshire  
Counties.

- U.S. Census Bureau,  
2019 American Community  
Survey (ACS) 1-year Estimates

Data since the pandemic that  
impacts women in Franklin and  
Hampshire Counties.

# TOTAL POPULATION TRENDS

**Franklin-Hampshire Population by Male and Female, 2000-2019**



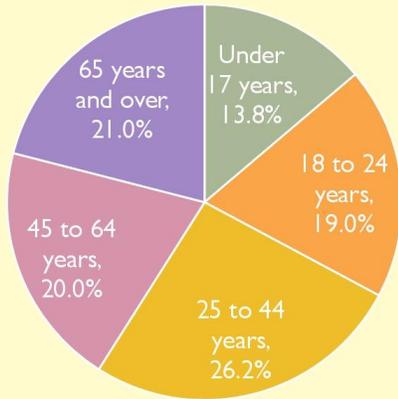
From 2000 to 2019, the Franklin-Hampshire region's **female population** grew **3.7%**.

In comparison, the Commonwealth's female population grew **7.8%** for the state.

Sources: US Census Bureau: 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census, 2019 ACS 1-year Estimates

# 2019 PROFILE – AGE

**Franklin-Hampshire Female Age Cohorts**



Estimated total female population Franklin-Hampshire region in 2019 was 122,577.

Compared to the Commonwealth, the Franklin-Hampshire region ...

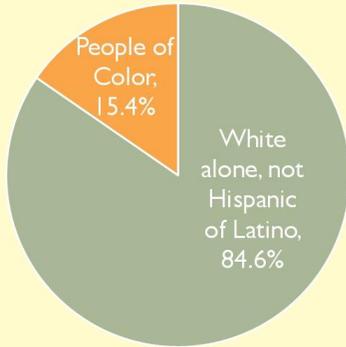
- 5% lower for under 17 years age cohort
- 9% higher for 18 to 24 years age cohort
- 6% lower for 25 to 44 years age cohort

Significantly higher percentage of 18 to 24 year olds in Hampshire County, compared to Franklin County.

Source: US Census Bureau: 2019 ACS 1-year Estimates

## 2019 PROFILE – RACE AND HISPANIC/LATINO ETHNICITY

### Franklin-Hampshire Female Population of Color and White Alone, Non-Hispanic Population



Estimated total female population Franklin-Hampshire region in 2019 was 122,577.

Compared to the Commonwealth, the Franklin-Hampshire region has ...

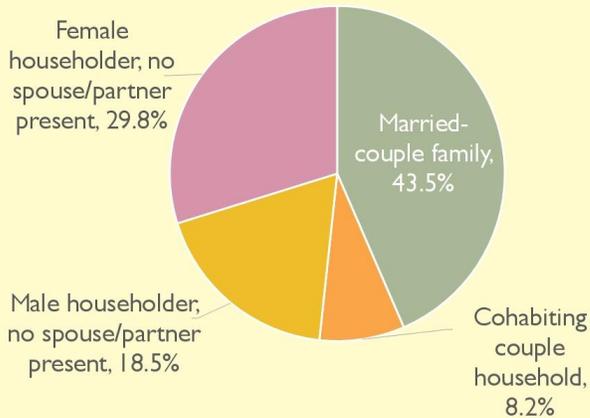
- Much lower % of population who are People of Color (*MA 29.5%*)

Significantly higher percentage of People of Color in Hampshire County, compared to Franklin County.

Source: US Census Bureau: 2019 ACS 1-year Estimates

## 2019 PROFILE – HOUSEHOLDS

### Franklin-Hampshire Household Types



Estimated total Franklin-Hampshire households in 2019 was 90,929.

Of the 27,097 Franklin-Hampshire **female-householder; no spouse/partner present** households ...

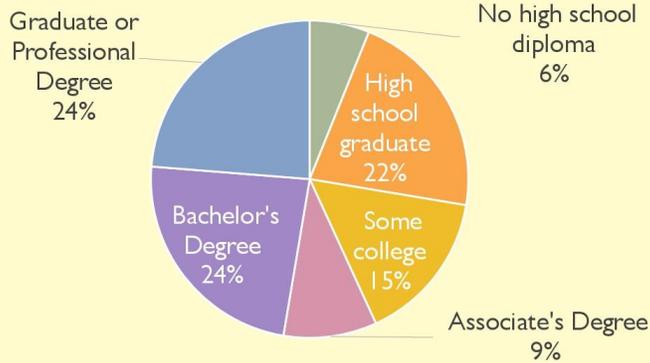
- 4,071 households or 15% live with own children under 18 years of age
- 8,591 households or 32% are age 65 years and over and lived alone

Comparable to Commonwealth percentages.

Source: US Census Bureau: 2019 ACS 1-year Estimates

# 2019 PROFILE – EDUCATION

## Franklin-Hampshire Highest Educational Attainment Level for Females age 25 years and over



Estimated Franklin-Hampshire population of females age 25 years and older in 2019 was 82,390.

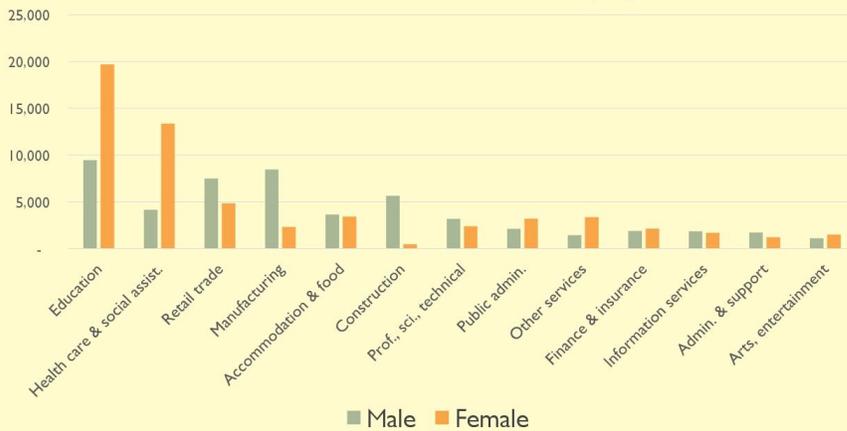
Compared to the Commonwealth, the Franklin-Hampshire region has...

- 6% lower for high school diploma
- 2% higher for Associate's Degree
- 7% higher for Graduate or Professional Degree

Sources US Census Bureau: 2019 ACS 1-year Estimates

# 2019 PROFILE – INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

## Franklin-Hampshire Industry Sector by Number of Male and Female Employed



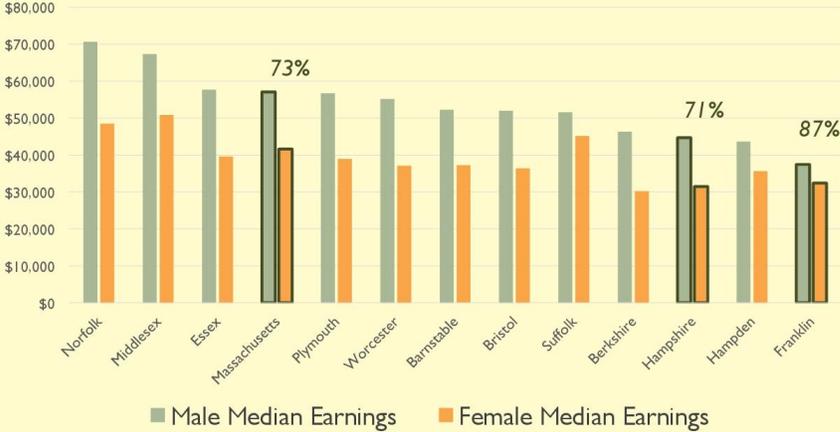
According to this data, the industries in the Franklin-Hampshire region with the **highest percentage of female employees** are...

- Health care & social assistance (76% female)
- Other services (70%)
- Educational services (68%)
- Public administration (60%)
- Arts, entertainment, recreation (57%)
- Finance & insurance (53%)

Sources US Census Bureau: 2019 ACS 1-year Estimates

# 2019 PROFILE – EARNINGS

**Median Earnings in Past 12 Months  
by Male and Female Employed**



Franklin County median earnings for...

- All employed: \$34,655
- Male employed: \$37,408
- Female employed: \$32,367

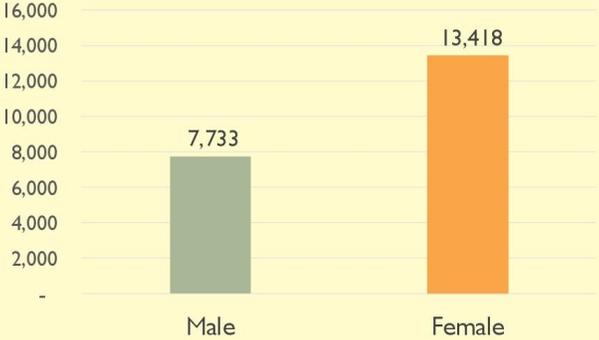
Hampshire County median earnings for...

- All employed: \$38,169
- Male employed: \$44,630
- Female employed: \$31,476

Source: US Census Bureau: 2019 ACS 1-year Estimates

# 2019 PROFILE – POVERTY

**Franklin-Hampshire Individuals with  
Incomes Below Poverty Level  
by Male and Female**



For the Franklin-Hampshire region, **10.2%** of all individuals (for whom poverty status was determined) were **below the poverty level**, compared to **9.4%** statewide.

Of all individuals below the poverty level in the Franklin-Hampshire region **63.4%** were **female**, compared to **56.7%** statewide.

Source: US Census Bureau: 2019 ACS 1-year Estimates

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC

### TIMELINE

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| March 10, 2020 | MA Gov. Baker- Lt. Gov. Polito Administration declared a state of emergency due to the outbreak of COVID-19.                             |
| March 11, 2020 | World Health Organization characterized the COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic.   |
| March 13, 2020 | Presidential proclamation declared a national emergency concerning COVID-19.   |
| March 24, 2020 | Baker-Polito Administration stay at home advisory and an emergency order to temporarily close non-essential businesses went into effect. |
| March 25, 2020 | Baker-Polito Administration suspended educational operations at schools and non-emergency child care programs.                           |
| March 27, 2020 | U.S. President issued major disaster declaration for state due to the pandemic.  |

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- Employment
- Housing
- Broadband access
- Vaccination

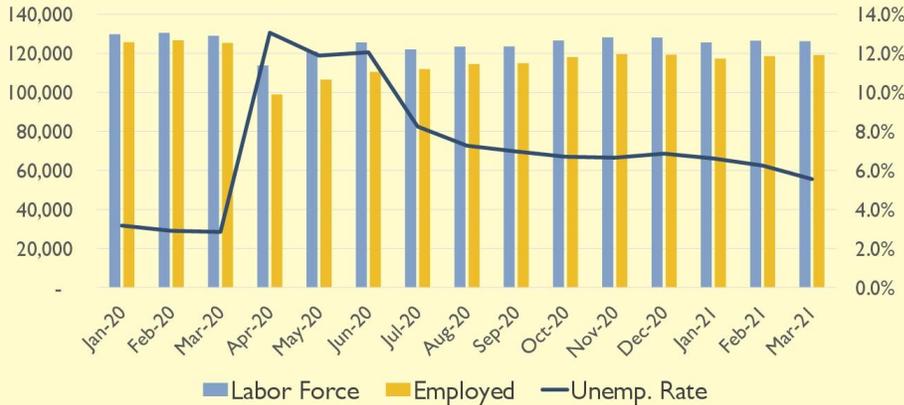
- Childcare
- Food security

Many factors influence the well being of women in the Franklin-Hampshire region during the pandemic.

Limited data resources available at the county level.

## LABOR FORCE AND EMPLOYMENT

Franklin-Hampshire Labor Force, Employed and Unemployment Rate, Jan 2020-Mar2021



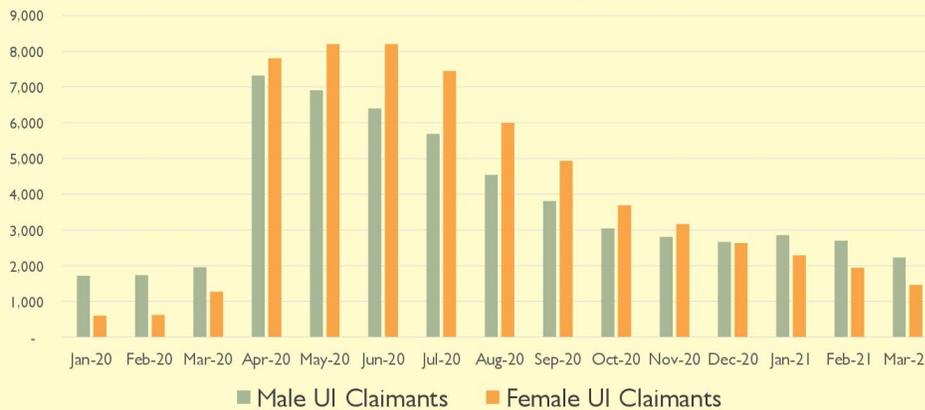
Unemployment rate went from **2.8%** in March 2020 to **13.1%** in April 2020.

Size of labor force from **129,023** to **113,836** or **-12%** decline from March to April 2020.

Source: MA Exec. Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Labor Force and Unemployment Data

## UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMANT

Franklin-Hampshire WDA Region UI Claimant Data by Male and Female, Jan. 2020 to Mar. 2021



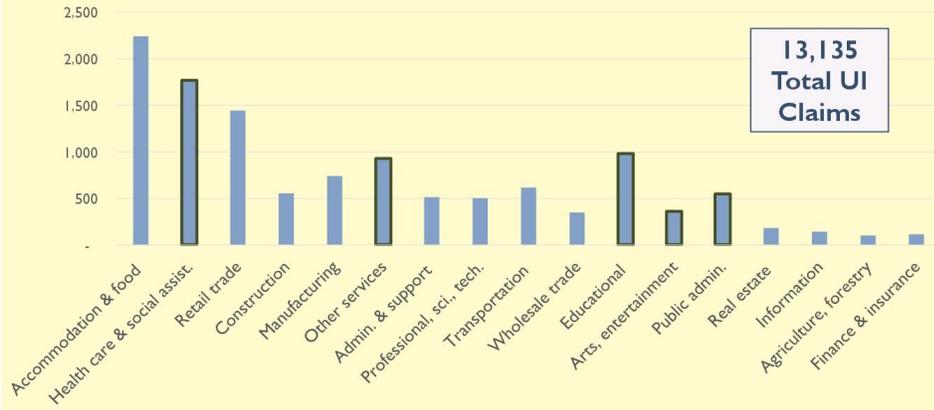
Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claimant data provides information about the applicant, including sex, age, industry, etc.

Data is by Workforce Development Area (WDA) which for the Franklin-Hampshire WDA includes North Quabbin.

Source: MA Exec. Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Labor Force and Unemployment Data

# UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMANT

Franklin-Hampshire WDA Region  
UI Claimant Data by Industry in JULY 2020



**13,135**  
Total UI  
Claims

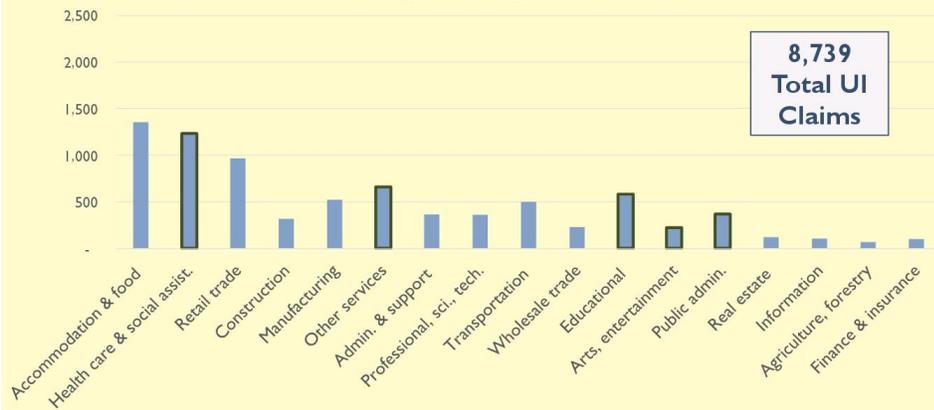
For reference:  
According to the 2019  
ACS 1-year Estimates,  
the top **industry**  
**sectors with female**  
**workers** were:

- Health care & social assistance
- Other services
- Educational services
- Public administration
- Arts, entertainment & recreation

Source: MA Exec. Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Labor Force and Unemployment Data

# UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMANT

Franklin-Hampshire WDA Region  
UI Claimant Data by Industry in SEPTEMBER 2020



**8,739**  
Total UI  
Claims

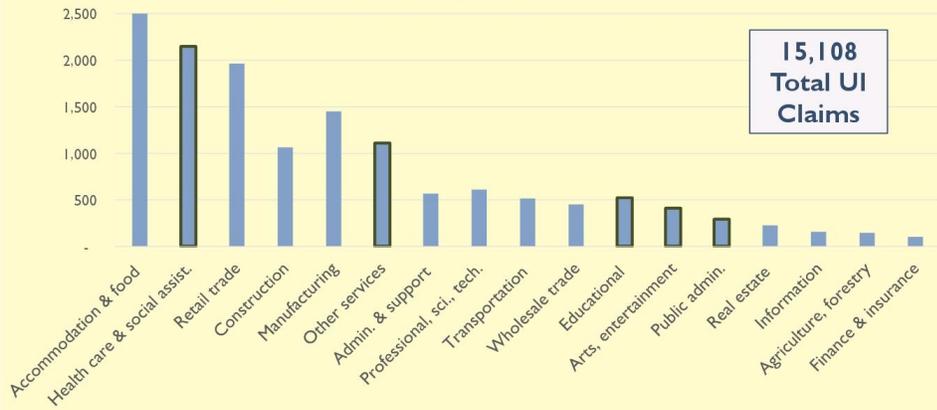
For reference:  
According to the 2019  
ACS 1-year Estimates,  
the top **industry**  
**sectors with female**  
**workers** were:

- Health care & social assistance
- Other services
- Educational services
- Public administration
- Arts, entertainment & recreation

Source: MA Exec. Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Labor Force and Unemployment Data

# UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMANT

Franklin-Hampshire WDA Region  
UI Claimant Data by Industry in MAY 2020



**15,108**  
Total UI  
Claims

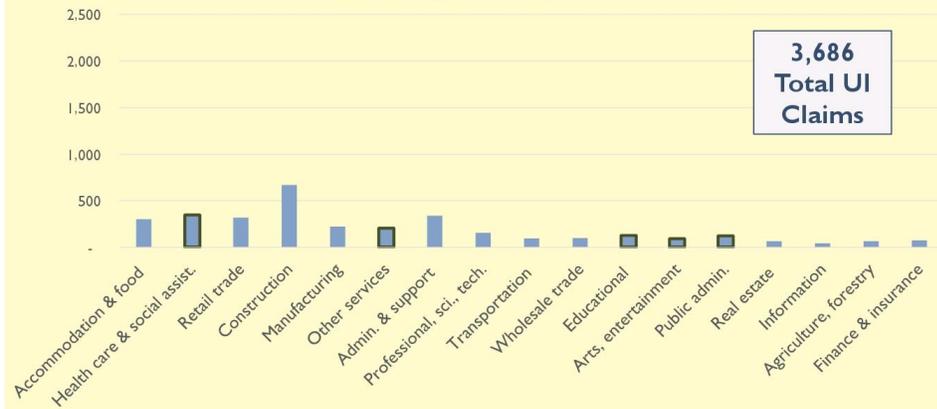
For reference:  
According to the 2019  
ACS 1-year Estimates,  
the top **industry**  
**sectors with female**  
**workers** were:

- Health care & social assistance
- Other services
- Educational services
- Public administration
- Arts, entertainment & recreation

Source: MA Exec. Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Labor Force and Unemployment Data

# UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMANT

Franklin-Hampshire WDA Region  
UI Claimant Data by Industry in MARCH 2021



**3,686**  
Total UI  
Claims

For reference:  
According to the 2019  
ACS 1-year Estimates,  
the top **industry**  
**sectors with female**  
**workers** were:

- Health care & social assistance
- Other services
- Educational services
- Public administration
- Arts, entertainment & recreation

Source: MA Exec. Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Labor Force and Unemployment Data

## REAL ESTATE TRENDS

| Single-Family Properties | 2019 Closed Sales | 2020 Closed Sales | % Change | 2019 Days on Market | 2020 Days on Market | % Change |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------|---------------------|---------------------|----------|
| Franklin County          | 607               | 650               | +7.1%    | 88                  | 67                  | -24%     |
| Hampshire County         | 1,251             | 1,269             | +1.4%    | 77                  | 63                  | -18%     |

| Single-Family Properties | 2019 Median Sales Price | 2020 Median Sales Price | % Change | Mar. 2021 YTD Median Sales Price |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------|----------------------------------|
| Franklin County          | \$226,500               | \$245,000               | +8.2%    | \$265,000                        |
| Hampshire County         | \$291,500               | \$319,900               | +9.7%    | \$332,750                        |

Real estate data shows increased activity in single-family homes sales over the past year and continuing.

*A recent report from the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston talks about rental affordability and COVID-19 in rural New England.*

Source: Realtors Association of Pioneer Valley, Local Market Update

## VACCINATION

**49%**  
of female Franklin-Hampshire region individuals have had at least one vaccination dose.

**33%**  
of female Franklin-Hampshire region individuals are fully vaccinated.

The MA Department of Public Health issues weekly reports on the vaccine distribution.

According to this data set, as of April 20, 2021, an estimated **46%** of Franklin-Hampshire region's **total population** has had at least one vaccination dose, and **30%** are fully vaccinated.

Source: MA Department of Public Health, Weekly COVID-19 Vaccination Dashboard, April 22, 2021 Report

## BROADBAND

|   | As of<br>January<br>2018 | As of<br>January<br>2020 | As of<br>January<br>2021                          |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| # of Franklin-Hampshire Towns "Unserved" by Last Mile Broadband             | 24                       | 19                       | 9<br>(construction underway and service in areas) |
| # of Franklin-Hampshire Towns "Under-served" by Last Mile Broadband (cable) | 7                        | 0                        | 0   |

Through the MBI Last Mile Program and municipal resources, significant efforts in recent years has improved broadband infrastructure access in unserved and underserved communities.

In April 2020, MBI launched Wi-Fi Hotspots in remaining unserved communities.

*Expanded broadband infrastructure access is important, but issues related to affordability and digital literacy remain.*

Source: Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) and Whip City Fiber

## DATA SNAPSHOT

Presentation by  
 Jessica Atwood  
 Economic Development Program Manager  
 Franklin Regional Council of Governments  
 Email: [jatwood@frcog.org](mailto:jatwood@frcog.org)



**Franklin Regional  
 Council of Governments**

# **MetroWest Regional Commission Annual Report**

## **MetroWest Commission on the Status of Women Annual Report June 2021**

**Mission:** Our goal as a Commission, beyond our mission statement as defined in our by-laws, is to strengthen our ability to advocate on behalf of MetroWest women. We seek to do this by listening, learning, and informing ourselves about the issues that matter to the majority of women in our region, determine effective outreach strategies and developing a robust list of stakeholders. These efforts are intended to improve our ability to play a role in the support and advancement of women and the promotion of their rights and opportunities.

### **Commissioners**

Nancy Rosenblum (Ashland, MA), Cathy Ashton (Wayland, MA), Ceylan Rowe (Northborough, MA), Jean Bertschmann (Hopkinton, MA), Stephanie Deeley (Framingham, MA), Heather Panahi (Wellesley, MA), Rachel Niemiec (Ashland, MA), Leslie Smart (Framingham, MA), Lindsey Galvao (Natick, MA), Lisa MacDonald (Natick, MA)

**Student Interns:** Deirdre Belger, Mia Remington, Anna Hamilton, Ashley Chiwaya, Sophia Lindstrom, Jana Husami, Joanna Barrow, Savanna Staples, Sophie Perlman

### **Officers Elected for 2021**

Heather Panahi, Chair  
Leslie Smart, Co-Vice-Chair  
Stephanie Deeley, Co-Vice-Chair  
Jean Bertschmann, Secretary  
Nancy Rosenblum, Legislative Committee Head  
Ceylan Rowe, Communications and Outreach Committee Head

### **Outgoing Members**

Cathy Ashton

### **New Members**

Lisa MacDonald

## **Overview/Summary of MWCSW Actions/Priorities**

Recognizing that this year was particularly challenging, given the stresses of the Covid-19 pandemic and its subsequent consequences (i.e. inability to meet and/or host events in person), the MetroWest Commission on the Status of Women saw this as an opportunity to make this a ‘building’ year. Although we continued to actively work to improve and increase the commission’s visibility throughout our region, the realities of stay-at-home orders and social distancing mandates made this somewhat difficult to achieve. Given these realities, we made a collective decision to narrow our focus so that we might be more effective. Ultimately, we arrived at three primary areas of concentration for the 2020-21 year:

- To envision, plan and execute the creation of our Athena Council—a girls’ internship/mentoring/advocacy program
- To identify, highlight and combat the issues of racial prejudice and systemic oppression impacting our BIPOC, AAPI, SWANA and LGBTQ constituents, and to amplify their voices so that greater progress in these areas might be made
- To analyze domestic and interpersonal violence legislation currently in place in an effort to identify weaknesses in said legislation so that we may develop new and better informed recommendations for policy and action in the future

**Establishing The Athena Council:** Following our participation in the State Commission’s Girls’ Listening Circles in May of 2020 and given the recent success we have had with student interns in the last few years, the MetroWest Commission opted to create a girls’ advocacy and advisory group. Named the Athena Council, we envisioned bringing together a select group of some of the MetroWest region’s younger women’s advocates and activists. Named for the Greek Goddess of War, Wisdom, Law & Justice and Inspiration, the council is the next line of defense in our ongoing battle for gender equity and justice in all areas of society. Under the mentorship of the MetroWest Commission on the Status of Women, the Council is tasked with supporting Commissioners in providing a “permanent, effective voice for the women living and working in the region” so that we may better advance equity and opportunity to all those who identify as women, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation or legal status (About Us).”

The first 12 council members, who were appointed by the MetroWest Commissioners in January of 2021, and represent young women ages 14-19 from a diversity of backgrounds, met regularly throughout the winter and spring in order to ensure that our youngest constituents in the region are being counted and their voices heard.

In its inaugural session, the primary focus of the council from January to June, was to build community and camaraderie amongst the council members themselves, recognizing that do be effective in advocacy and activism, there must be a deep sense of trust and a collective or shared mission. With the support of Commissioner Rachel Niemiec and student intern Deirdre Belger, the council began identifying and articulating the general needs of their peers, emphasizing several areas that require more legislative and community attention:

1. Providing young women and girls with greater access to mental health providers and services, particularly in public school facilities
2. Strongly encouraging schools and extracurricular programs to broaden their hiring procedures to ensure that there is a critical mass of BIPOC, APPI and LGBTQ teachers, counselors and staff members in all public and private schools, so that all students and their families feel more adequately seen, heard and supported
3. Address the very real problem of period poverty in public schools
4. Encourage the creation and mandate the implementation of curriculum that teaches young people about consent and healthy relationships in an effort to prevent future cases of interpersonal violence, sexual assault and rape

**Girls' Listening Circle:** In May 2021, the Athena Council planned and hosted its first virtual listening circle. Teen girls were invited to join and share their experiences, struggles and needs with members of the council. In all, there were 17 attendees. Again, the issues raised were largely those which you see above. The council, which is now off for the summer, will be following up this listening circle by drafting and distributing a climate survey to gather more data on the aforementioned issues and to make policy recommendations based on the survey results. They will also be hosting a teen event in October of 2021 as part of our Commission's recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness month.

**Public Hearing:** In an effort to gather data and testimony specific to racial inequities and systemic oppression in the MetroWest, our commission hosted a virtual public hearing on February 2, 2021. Senator Becca Rausch and Representatives Hannah Kane and Jack Lewis joined us for the event. Ten people shared oral testimony, to outline the issues facing women of color and their families throughout the MetroWest. We also had the opportunity to hear from Chien-Chi, Executive Director for the Asian Women for Health, who highlighted the impact that Covid and other health-related issues are affecting women and girls of Asian descent. The hearing, which was the first of what we hope will be many steps towards advancing racial, LGBTQ and socio-economic equity in our region and all of Massachusetts, helped us to prioritize legislation and policy actions that would best meet the needs and wants of our community members.

**Meetings:** To advance our work on the interpersonal violence front, the commission has hosted several drop-in virtual and phone meetings with fellow community leaders in this field. Specifically, we have met numerous times with Patricia Hohl, *Director of Voices Against Violence* and with members of *Jane Doe*. We see both organizations as important partners in our work to preventing and addressing interpersonal violence and look forward to the work ahead. Further, we met with

Representatives Jack Lewis and Maria Robinson to try and understand the legislative process better with regard to how to research, write and propose legislation.

**Testimony:** The MetroWest Commission provided written and oral testimony in late May during a public hearing specific to the Healthy Youth Bill ((S.318/H.673) This is a bill that our commission has supported for many years now and which we would like to finally see pass. We also met with Rep. Jack Lewis to discuss further amending the ‘Consent Bill’, which he and Rep. Natalie Higgins proposed this legislative session. Believing that the bill required a more comprehensive definition of ‘consent’, as well as some mention of ‘healthy relationship’ education, we drafted our own proposed friendly amendment and submitted this to our representatives. We hope to discuss this further when more debate/discussion about the bill occurs.

**Voices Against Violence Purple Passion 5K Walk:** On Saturday, September 19, 2020 members of the MWCSW Commission formed a team to walk in the annual Voices Against Violence *Purple Passion 5K Run/Walk* to raise awareness around domestic violence and sexual assault in Massachusetts. The event allowed commissioners to participate in an advocacy activity together, as well as to make connections and network with other organizations/agencies that are also committed to working on behalf of women and girls in the region. While many of us completed this 5K walk, we had to do so social distanced and on our own.

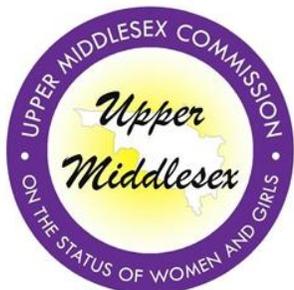
**Partnerships/Networking:** We continue to work at growing our network of partners throughout the MetroWest region. With each event hosted, we are trying to get our name out there and offer our support to like-minded organizations. In particular, we feel confident in our growing relationships with Voices Against Violence, Jewish Family Services, Dignity Matters and Planned Parenthood. Further, we are proud of the combined work we have been able to do with Senator Becca Rausch and Representatives Jack Lewis, Maria Robinson and Carmine Gentile, who have continued to be strong partners in women’s advocacy.

### **Goals for 2020-21**

- To identify BIPOC, AAPI, SWANA and LGBTQ-serving organizations in all towns/cities in the MetroWest so that we can reach out to them and learn about how we can partner with them as well as amplify the work they are doing in the region
- Support the Athena Council by helping its members develop a more pronounced regional presence, as well as to help them develop their advocacy and activism skills
- To actively recruit more women of color to apply for vacancies on the commission as they become available
- To actively recruit more young women of color to join the Athena Council
- To continue to boost the commission’s visibility among the region’s constituents, as well as other organizations focused on improving the lives of women and girls

- To organize and facilitate at least two public events in the next year
- To organize four events—one per week—during October 2021, which is Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- Engage in commission-wide community service activities within our community
- Continue to invite community leaders to our monthly meetings to hear from them directly and strengthen our relationship with their organizations
- Continue to build our social media presence
- To host a regular girls' virtual meeting space to discuss and organize around issues and to share 'tips of the trade' regarding advocacy and activism, in order to empower our young sisters.
- To develop stronger partnerships with our sister commissioners in the other regional commissions and identify opportunities to work together on issues/projects for which we have a shared interest
- To reach out more broadly to our legislators in an effort to build stronger connections

## Upper Middlesex CSW



### Upper Middlesex Commission on the Status of Women

Annual Report 2020 – 2021

#### **Mission**

The Upper Middlesex Commission on the Status of Women (UMCSW) seeks to uphold ideals and pursue actions consonant with the upward economic and social mobility of women and girls.

We do so by:

- Gathering empirical evidence to mobilize and amplify the voices of women and girls in Upper Middlesex; and
- Generating transformational recommendations for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that create and sustain accountable systems that enable women and girls to thrive.

#### **Commissioners**

Jennifer Roecklein-Canfield (Littleton), Connie Chow (Newton), Mary Delorse Coleman (Cambridge), Corrine Corso (Ayer), Christina Li (Lexington), Rebecca Neale (Bedford), Kristina Racek Pechulis (Melrose), Linda Rossetti (Winchester), and Anna Tse (Malden).

During the 2020-2021 fiscal year, Jennifer Roecklein-Canfield and Linda Rossetti were co-chairs, Kristina Racek-Pachulis served as vice-chair.

Beginning fiscal year 2021-2022, the following officers will serve on the UMCSW: Connie Chow, Chair, and Christina Li, Secretary.

#### **Community Assessment**

UMCSW, in partnership with the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women and representatives from communities within our Region, focused our community work in 2020-2021 on developing an Equity Audit Pilot. This initiative is designed to increase the understanding of gender, along with other inequities, and to serve as an important tool for the purpose of improving the status and well-being of all women and girls through informed data collection. This data could be transformational to management processes, including hiring and promoting, as well as contributing to policy development within governmental and nonprofit agencies. A full description of these activities can be found in the Advocacy section below.

### **Hearings/Public Forums**

The UMCSW did not hold any public forums outside of public discussions related to the Equity Audit Pilot described in the Advocacy section below.

### **Advocacy**

#### *Equity Audit Pilot*

The UMCSW's Advocacy work in 2020 - 2021 was dedicated entirely to initiating an Equity Audit Pilot in cooperation with leading institutions and two communities within our Region. UMCSW initiated a partnership with UMass Boston's *Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy* and UMass Lowell's *Center for Women and Work* to pilot an intersectional Equity Audit in two Massachusetts communities; Arlington and Lowell. The goal of the Audit was to develop guidelines and tools for similar future audits to be conducted across the state. The Audit sought to emphasize the importance of understanding gender in concert with other inequities, through informed data collection, that could be used to potentially change management processes, and contribute to policy development and changes.

The Equity Audit Pilot seeks to define the scope of an intersectional Equity Audit Model for Massachusetts. The Pilot will eventually involve an in-depth exploration of existing models, analysis of data availability, and identification of issues most important to the community. The group secured a UMass Boston FY21 Public

Service Grant and plans to use the funds to support preparatory activities for audits to be conducted in Lowell and Arlington and set the stage for obtaining external funds to carry out the audits in these two target communities.

The Equity Audit Pilot's specific objectives are to:

- Identify partners in appropriate government agencies and community organizations in the local context and outline a generalizable model regarding key stakeholders to include in any community that will participate in such an Equity Audit once launched;
- Determine populations and topics of focus as well as inequity measures to include, based on available data; and
- Develop a detailed research design and funding proposal to conduct a full Equity Audit in Lowell and Arlington.

The team determined that Lowell and Arlington – largely due to their varied population sizes and compositions, economic drivers, governmental structures, and elected leadership trends – will serve as appropriate municipal partners for this collaborative project and for launching an Equity Audit Model that can be replicated in other cities and towns. In collaboration with members of the UMCSW, The UMass Boston team will focus on the Arlington context and UMass Lowell will focus on Lowell. All team members working collaboratively to design a process that will fit both communities and serve as a model for others.

In light of the COVID-19 crisis, the Lowell team decided that potential partner organizations should focus on the essential needs of the Lowell community, and we hope to re-engage soon.

The UMCSW is honored to collaborate with the following individuals and organizations on this exciting work:

Randy Albelda, Department of Economics (UMass Boston)  
Darcie Boyer, Center for Women and Work (UMass Lowell)  
Connie Chow, Upper Middlesex Commission on the Status of Women  
Mignon Duffy, Department of Sociology (UMass Lowell)  
Monica Galizzi, Department of Economics (UMass Lowell)  
Christa Kelleher, Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy (UMass Boston)  
Cheryl Llewellyn, Department of Sociology (UMass Lowell)  
Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson, Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy (UMass Boston)

Jenifer Whitten-Woodring, Department of Political Science (UMass Lowell)

In addition to the Equity Audit Pilot, the UMCSW participated in the following advocacy work in 2020 - 2021:

#### *Dignity at Work Act*

UMCSW endorsed the Dignity at Work Act, an initiative aimed at addressing all forms of harassment in the workplace. We agreed to the following:

- 1) **Take the Survey.** [This link](#) leads to the survey. A more complete description can be found in the email below. It takes less than 5 minutes.
- 2) **Post Survey on social media.** Christina and Connie, thank you for offering to put this on UMCSW's FB and Twitter accounts!
- 3) **Distribute to your personal networks.** Please pass this survey along to those in your network and encourage them to add their voices

#### *Additional Advocacy Activities*

-The UMCSW Co-Chairs met with several state representatives to educate them on the mission and focus of the MA Commission on the Status of Women and on our regional issues.

-Co-Chair Jennifer Roecklein-Canfield, participated on the Girls Initiative Subcommittee of the MA Commission and served as a Moderator during one of the open listening sessions in April.

-The UMCSW initiated a collaboration with Commissioner Shaitia Spruell, MCSW and Commissioner Cheryl Turner, Somerville Commission, to pursue opportunities surrounding economic empowerment of women. As COVID eases, the groups plan to schedule a live virtual workshop.

#### **Priorities for 2021-2022**

The UMCSW priorities for the upcoming year are as follows:

1. Launch the Equity Audit Pilot with a special emphasis on establishing broader community relationships in support of the Pilot's objectives (see Advocacy section above);
2. Continue to utilize a standing Agenda for our bi-monthly meetings. This Agenda includes but is not limited to:
  - a. Legislative/Advocacy and Bill Sponsorship/Endorsements;
  - b. Hearing/Listening Event Updates.
  - c. Community Spotlights, e.g. guests from organizations active in serving our constituents;