



**THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**



July 1, 2020

**PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Jill Ashton, Executive Director  
617-626-6525, [jill.ashton@mass.gov](mailto:jill.ashton@mass.gov)

**Massachusetts Commission On The Status of Women Elect New Leadership**

**DENELLA CLARK**, Hyde Park resident and president of Boston Arts Academy (BAA) Foundation, has been elected as Chair of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW). Chairwoman Clark was first appointed to the Commission in 2015 and reappointed in 2018 by Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker. She was elected to Chair by her fellow Commissioners, and is the first woman of color to lead the Commission. Clark's past roles include serving as Vice Chair and Treasurer.

"The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women is a critical source of empowerment and force for change across the Commonwealth," said Chairwoman Clark. "As the first Black woman to chair the Commission, one of my goals is to amplify legislation that will directly benefit and improve the lives of all women, especially women of color. Defending Massachusetts women from sexual harassment in the workplace, decreasing the wage gap between women and their male colleagues, and enabling more working mothers to run for public office – I will help the Commission push for positive change on these issues, among many others."

A nonprofit executive, mother and philanthropist, Chairwoman Clark is passionate about diversity, equity and inclusion. As President of BAA Foundation, her vision and leadership have created significantly greater visibility and financial sustainability for BAA, the city's only public high school for the visual and performing arts. Clark's stewardship of the Foundation has helped the school provide a world-class, arts-intensive education to a diverse student body where most students come from low-income families. For six consecutive years, 97 percent of BAA graduating seniors have been accepted to college.

"Denella Clark has a proven track record of supporting causes and organizations that improve our communities, and I was proud to appoint her to serve on the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women," said Governor Charlie Baker. "Denella's election as the first woman of color to chair the Commission is an important milestone, and we look forward to her continued work to promote equity for women and people of color across the Commonwealth."

MCSW was one of the leaders in drafting and garnering support for the Massachusetts Equal Pay Act (MEPA) signed into law by Governor Baker in August 2016, becoming effective July 2018. In addition to the support of legislation, MCSW has worked in partnership with constituents and legislators to provide space and feedback regarding the impact of COVID-19 and related policy on women and girls of Massachusetts.



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The Commission has continued to provide efforts during this time that put women and girls at the forefront and advocates for their voices to be heard in a variety of surveys, listening sessions and hearings. This necessary work for women and girls of the Commonwealth will continue throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

“Denella Clark is a dear friend and fierce champion for women and girls in Massachusetts and beyond,” said U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley. “For as long as I’ve known her, Denella has always raised her voice to ensure the needs of women and girls are centered at decision-making tables, and I know she’ll continue to do so as Chairwoman. I’m so proud to call Denella a partner in good and to see her make history as the first-ever Black woman to chair this commission.”

“As we advance community-led change and transformation of inequitable systems in Boston and in our Commonwealth, Black women must not only be heard, we must lead,” said Boston City Councilor Andrea Campbell. “Denella is a leader that centers the voices of those who don’t often see themselves or their stories represented, who pushes our institutions to serve our communities equitably, and who knows what is at stake when they do not. I look forward to continuing to work with her and the Commission to elevate the voices, experiences, needs, and leadership of women and girls in City Hall and our State House.”

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**REBECCA BACT**, Newton resident and attorney, has been elected as MCSW Vice Chair. Bact was appointed to the Commission in 2017 by Governor Charlie Baker. From 2018-2020, Rebecca served as Secretary of MCSW and Vice Chair of the Program and Planning Committee. Rebecca is committed to advancing the interests of all women, girls, and non-binary people, and is particularly committed to hearing from and including the voices of communities of color, immigrant communities, and the LGBTQ community as to their particular needs. Outside of the Commission, Rebecca works as a lawyer, including at the firms of Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP and Beck Reed Riden LLP, where she represented clients in litigation, concentrating on intellectual property and appellate matters. She is also dedicated to her pro bono practice, which has focused on LGBTQ and immigrant rights.

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**MARLENE SALLO**, Marina Bay resident and Executive Director of Disability Law Center, has been elected as MCSW Secretary. Sallo was appointed to the Commission in 2019. She has dedicated her career to protecting the rights of disenfranchised and vulnerable children through her work as a case manager, special education teacher, and child welfare attorney. In addition to MCSW, she also serves on the MA Restrictive Housing Oversight Committee, the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee, and the Board of Trustees of the Boys & Girls Club of Boston. Previous roles include Chief of Staff and Senior Counsel for the U.S. Dept. of Justice Community Relations Service and Staff Director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

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**SARA SCHNORR**, Holliston resident and Of Counsel in the Boston office of Locke Lord LLP, has been re-elected as MCSW Treasurer. Schnorr was re-appointed to the MCSW in 2018 by Governor Charlie Baker. As a former partner and now Of Counsel at Locke Lord LLP, her more than 40 years of practicing law have focused on complex commercial real estate development, acquisition, leasing, financing and permitting, with specialties in the biotech, telecommunications, and affordable housing and community development industries. In addition, she has served as a former chair of the Town Of Wellesley's Advisory (Finance) Committee, and as a member of the Founders' Circle of GLAD's Transgender Rights Project, SpeakOUT Boston, the American Bar Association, and the Massachusetts LGBTQ Bar Association.

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**LIZ FRIEDMAN**, Northampton resident and national leader on perinatal mental health, has been re-elected as Chair of the Legislative and Policy Committee. Liz Friedman MFA has served as a Commissioner since 2017, appointed by Speaker Robert DeLeo because of her ongoing commitment to perinatal women's health and her effective advocacy on behalf of the MA Pregnant Workers Fairness amongst other critical bills. Commissioner Friedman currently serves as the Legislative Chair of the Commission and brings more than 30 years of expertise in advocacy including serving on the MA PPD Commission since its inception in 2011 and launching a national coalition for perinatal mental health. She is currently on the Advisory Boards of MA PPD Fund and It Takes A Village and is an associate at Effie's Grace, focused on maternal-child health policy.

She Co-founded MotherWoman, a reproductive justice organization in Western MA and is currently Co-Founder and Co-President, with Annette Cycon, of GPS Group Peer Support, a national organization leading communities, non-profits and state-entities in implementation of trauma-responsive and culturally co-created support groups across a spectrum of lived experiences including parenthood, incarceration, addiction/recovery, and those targeted by immigration discrimination. Currently she is launching the COVID-19 Emergency Support Program across the U.S. and internationally. In 2010, she received the Ted Women's Award for her outstanding work on behalf of mothers and was highlighted in two award-winning documentaries on perinatal mental health, "Dark Side of the Full Moon" (2016) and "Not Carol" (2019).

Commissioner Friedman has never been more excited than in her work on the MCSW. She says, "We have the opportunity to unite ALL women in the Commonwealth towards a collective voice as we share our experiences and partner with legislators in advocating for equity for each one of us. Now is the time. Come join us!"



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**JEAN FOX**, Freetown resident and manager of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's South Coast Rail project, has been elected as Chair of the Program and Planning Committee. Fox was appointed to the Commission by MA Speaker of the House, Robert A. DeLeo, in 2017. Jean has participated on numerous educational boards and committees in the South Coast and was a founding board member of the Alma del Mar Charter School and a SMILES mentor for years. She is Chair of the Freetown-Lakeville Regional School Committee and Chair of the Global Learning Charter Public School Board of Trustees. Prior to joining MassDOT, Jean was the Youth Council Director and *LiteracyWorks* Entrepreneur at the Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board. Jean also served on the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) Commission, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the SRTA Advisory Board.

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**AUDREY HALL**, Framingham resident, TV Talk Show Producer and Host and Strategic Communications Consultant, has been elected as chair of the Budget and Personnel Committee for the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW). She is also the Chair of the MCSW COVID-19 Action Committee and past Vice-Chair of the Legislative Committee. Hall was appointed to the MCSW in 2018 by Senate President Karen E. Spilka. She is the Clerk of the Framingham Council on Aging and is a member of the Board of Directors of AFTV. A business executive with 30 years of experience in public and private sector Executive Management in Marketing, Advertising, Public Relations, and Operations, Hall also served as a public education advocate for 14 years, and as an elected town meeting member for 19 years - 12 as Chair of the Ways and Means Committee. She is a political activist with an unrelenting passion for justice, equal opportunity, and integrity in government.

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