



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

BCCSW Vision: To be an effective, inclusive voice and vehicle for action  
for all women and girls of Berkshire County

### **ANNUAL REPORT 2018**

#### **Mission**

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 mission of the Berkshire County Commission on the Status of Women (BCCSW) is to provide a permanent, effective voice for women across Berkshire County that facilitates and fosters community and inclusiveness among women. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights and the full enjoyment of life for all women throughout their lives.

#### **Commissioners**

Reina Antunez (*Cheshire, MA*); Meg Bossong (*Pittsfield, MA*); Rebbecca Cohen (*North Adams, MA*); Luci Leonard, Outgoing Chair (*West Stockbridge, MA*); Diane Sturtevant (*Windsor, MA*); Gwendolyn Hampton VanSant (*Great Barrington, MA*)

#### **BCCSW Focus**

In 2017-2018, BCCSW experienced significant turnover in Commissioners, and thus spent much of the year clarifying and articulating the meaning of its mission and the goals for engagement and how best to serve Berkshire County women and girls. We are excited to recruit a truly multigenerational pool of candidates for the remaining open spaces on the Commission, and to have broad representation from across Berkshire County.

Over the last year, a large range of civic groups have mobilized throughout Berkshire County, focusing on a range of social issues and policy advocacy, like Greylock Together in North County; Northern Berkshires for Racial Justice; Berkshire Pride/Out in the Berkshires; Not in Our Town; and the Four Freedoms Coalition and Indivisible in Pittsfield. The BCCSW sees a role for collaboration with these groups to particularly highlight policies and issues that are of interest and importance to women and girls in Berkshire County.

#### **Legislative Breakfast**

BCCSW hosted its annual legislative breakfast at the Pittsfield Country Club on Friday, March 16<sup>th</sup>. This year, the Commission decided to take the lead of the uptick in civic engagement, and give breakfast attendees the chance to speak on issues of importance and personal experience

with their state and Congressional representatives. The breakfast took the form of a round-robin, with representatives circulating between issue-based tables to hear from constituents. These issues included Youth Concerns, Transit and Infrastructure, Domestic and Sexual Violence, Opioid Use, Affordable Housing, and Racial Justice in the Berkshires. We also paired that opportunity with a community resource fair, hosting over 15 local organizations who provide everything from legal aid to childcare to health services.

This year's breakfast was one of our best attended, by both community members and legislators. We saw over 75 community attendees, and legislators and aids from the Pittsfield Mayor's office, our state senators and representative, and aides from Senator Warren and Representative Neal's office.

We received overwhelmingly positive feedback (and it was so successful that the Junior League and Berkshire Athenaeum replicated our format at an event later in the spring), and plan to expand on this format going forward.

### **Goals for 2018-2019**

- Establish a fully operational Commission, which will create the stability needed to accomplish our mission and goals
  - Recruit for vacant Commissioner positions
  - Partner with existing civic groups to co-host meetings
- Facilitate ongoing collaboration with the MCSW and learn from the successes of other regional Commissions
  - Explore collaboration with the Hampshire, Hampden, and Franklin County Commissions on issues of broader Western MA concern

Submitted by Meg Bossong on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018.