



## Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women

Annual Report  
May 2018

### **Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women ~ Members**

Chantel Bethea ~ Worcester  
Cathleen Liberty ~ Worcester  
Mary Burns ~ Sturbridge  
Irene Rodriguez- Hernandez ~Gardner  
Amy Ebbeson ~ Rutland  
Judith Ockene ~ Harvard  
Randi Zanca ~Northbridge  
Joann Stemmermann ~ Bolton

### **The following were nominated and elected as officers:**

*Chantel Bethea ~ Chair*  
*Amy Ebbeson ~ Vice Chair*  
*Cathleen Liberty ~ Secretary (note taker)*

### **Advisory Board Members**

Robin Currie ~ Worcester  
Courtney Ross Esobar ~ Worcester  
Talia Gallagher ~ Worcester  
Jacqueline McLean ~ Shrewsbury  
Fiona LaRosa-Waters ~ Cambridge  
Angelique Bouthot ~ Worcester  
Eve Gilmore ~ Berlin

### *Purpose:*

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 Worcester County Commission on that Status of Women is to act as a permanent centralizing force and effective voice in the County of Worcester 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

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Website: <https://worcestercountycommission.weebly.com/>

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guidance. The commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the full enjoyment of life for all women throughout their lives.

### *Membership:*

We had two members step down due to work and commitment level of the commission. We have filled those two positions with Mary Burns of Sturbridge, and Melissa Byrne of Shrewsbury.

Melissa Byrne on March 12<sup>th</sup> had to resign for personal reasons.

We are now looking to fill one seat on the commission.

### *Hearings/Public Forums:*

- The Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women will be holding different public forums throughout Worcester County every year. We had our first on "The Trauma of Sexual Assault from a Male and Female Perspective" at the Boys and Girls of Worcester on Sept 11<sup>th</sup> 2017. We had guest speakers Nikki Bell of LIFT (Living In Freedom Together) and Stephen Montagna of Violence Prevention and Social Justice Activist and Educator



- We had our "Prescription Drug Public Forum" on Oct 16<sup>th</sup> 2017 we had the District Attorney Joe Early collaborate with us. We had people drive up from New York to hear the concerns of this huge topic. Misuse of prescription drugs means taking a medication in a manner or dose other than prescribed; taking someone else's prescription, even if for a legitimate medical complaint such as pain; or taking a medication to feel euphoria (i.e., to get high) Opioids—usually prescribed to treat pain Central nervous system [CNS]

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depressants (this category includes tranquilizers, sedatives, and hypnotics)—used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders

Stimulants—most often prescribed to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

PUBLIC FORUM that will highlight the concerns of the public.

Specifically, CSW would like to hear testimony on personal experiences with the misuse of prescription drugs.



*Additional Activities:*

### **Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women held their 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Legislative Breakfast September 25<sup>th</sup> 2017**

The meeting included breakfast, networking, and a panel discussion among local elected officials and experts on policy issues impacting women's issues.

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- **Worcester County CSW partnered with the Racial Justice Task Force of the YWCA for the Fall Forum: Taking a Hard Look at Feminism Through a Racial Lens**

What does it mean to identify as a feminist? Are women of color and white women defining it differently? How have women of color and white women experienced the "women's movement" differently? What role does race play in advancing gender equity? What role does gender play in advancing racial equity?

Join us as a diverse group of local female academics, community organizers, public servants, and legal and media professionals reflect on these and other questions.

Moderated by Dr. Nicole Overstreet of Clark University

Panelists:

Dr. Cara Lisa Berg-Powers, Executive Director of Transformative Culture Project

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### *Conclusion:*

This year's findings demonstrated that the women of Worcester County have a lot of work to do to achieve the potential and full equality of all women. The most pressing issue is the war on drugs for women; the lack of services, mental health for women and their children, and beds for those trying to become better in their communities.

### *Priority Issues identified:*

- Mental health
- Health care navigation, available services, transportation to services, appeal process when service is denied
- Substance abuse
- Eating disorders
- Culturally Competent/ Appropriate Services
- Domestic violence
- Sexual abuse/ Rape
- Economics for women- Jobs, Financial literacy
- Childcare , Child hunger – WIC

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- Immigrant women
- Education (pre-k through college)
  - Stem pipeline
  - Head-start
  - Teen pregnancy
- Seniors
- Veterans

### *Goals for 2018 - 2019*

1. Hold more public forums in the surrounding cities and towns in Worcester County.
2. Collaborate with the Mass CSW and Regional Commissions to hold more public hearings in order 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.
3. Maintain regular contact with our legislators and officials on issues that concern women that have been identified as our priority areas of focus.
4. Continue to collaborate with other organizations, and public officials, in order to support women and girls through public awareness.
5. Work closely with our sister commissions on implementing and developing best practices for the betterment of each commission.
6. Work on writing and proposing new state level legislative policies for women.
7. Attend community events and share literature about the commission to promote awareness of our role and work to increase involvement in our activities.

Submitted by: Chantel Bethea, Chair of the Worcester County CSW

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