



# Montgomery County *Commission for Women*

Tuesday, August 26 marks Women's Equality Day, an annual commemoration of the passage of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote. On the 94th anniversary of this important milestone, we are provided with an opportunity to reflect on the gains our country, and community of Montgomery County, have made towards gender equality and to highlight the challenges that still remain.

While women have experienced tremendous gains since gaining the right to vote, women in our community still face an imbalance related to financial security, educational opportunities, human rights and political representation. For example, a 2012 study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that the median annual earning for women in the State of Maryland was \$48,000, compared to men whose median annual earning is \$58,000. Maryland was also once ranked No.1 in the nation when it came to the percentage of women in its state legislature, but now women only hold 30 percent of seats in the legislature.

As an organization committed to advancing the rights of women in Montgomery County, the Montgomery County Commission for Women is committed to identifying inequities in laws, policies, practices and procedures, and recommending and promoting remedies. Some areas identified as priorities include economic empowerment for women and families, providing health and safety for women and girls, and advancing the role of women in science, technology, engineering and math.

Our group of fifteen volunteer citizens from the community works to provide information and resources on women's issues in the community; hosts informational workshops for women in the county on issues related to personal, financial and physical health; holds public hearings and supports legislation that advances policies on behalf of women; and organizes an annual legislative briefing which gathers leaders and volunteers from across the county to learn more about these issues and how they can play a role in advocating for change.

On this Women's Equality Day, I encourage members of our community to re-commit to addressing some of the issues women still face in achieving true equality and supporting efforts to remedy those challenges.

*Debra Bright-Harris*

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