



# Montgomery County *Commission for Women*

---

Annual Report  
Fiscal Year 2017  
July 2016-June 2017

---

The Montgomery County Commission for Women's core purpose is to advocate for women at the local, state and federal level. Our primary areas of focus are the following:

- Identify areas of gender-based inequality and disparate treatment
- Monitor and advocate for legislation and policy
- Conduct research and provide testimony
- Plan and implement Women's Legislative Briefing
- Develop publications and newsletter
- Conduct community forums and increase community awareness
- Liaise and reach out to diverse populations and groups

### **Officers**

Lorna Forde, President  
Beatrice Lauman, 1<sup>st</sup> VP  
Angela Whitehead Quigley, 2<sup>nd</sup> VP  
Bobbe Mintz, Human Trafficking Task Force  
Nicole Drew/Britt Hogue, Programming  
Karmen Rouland, Policy and Legislation  
Debra Bright Harris, WLB  
Katie Smith, WLB

### **Commissioners**

Lorna Forde  
Nicole Drew  
Barbara Mintz  
Daphnee Cherubin  
Farah Nageer-Kanthor  
Debra A. Bright Harris  
Tracy Evans  
Diana Rubin  
Angela Whitehead Quigley  
Beatrice Lauman  
Donna Rojas  
Britt Hogue  
Karmen Rouland  
Giulia C. McMherson  
Katie Smith

### **CFW Team**

Jodi Finkelstein, Executive Director  
Merci Wolff, Director of Programs and Events  
Amy Meldau, Co-Coordinator, Re-Entry Program  
Jessica Jones, Co-Coordinator, Re-Entry Program

## **Table of Contents**

- I. President's Message
- II. Executive Summary (Executive Director's Report)
- III. 2017 Strategic Priorities
  - a. Economic Empowerment
  - b. Health and Safety
  - c. Unique Challenges
  - d. Under-Representation in the Workforce & Education
  - e. Fairness in Family Law
- IV. Committees & Working Groups
  - a. Policy & Legislation (PAL) Committee
    - i. 2017 State Legislative Agenda
    - ii. 2017 County Legislative Agenda
  - b. Women's Legislative Briefing (WLB)
  - c. Human Trafficking Task Force
  - d. Programming Committee
  - e. CFW STEM Scholarship
- V. Other Business & Events
  - a. Bylaws
- VI. Looking Forward

## President's Message



*Ms. Lorna Forde was the President of the of the Montgomery County Commission for Women for 2016-2017.*

As President of the Montgomery County Commission for Women I am delighted to present this annual report highlighting our many activities and accomplishments over the last year. It has been a year of growth and expansion for the Commission.

In the last year, we spearheaded the elevation by law of our Commission's Human Trafficking Task Force to the Human Trafficking Committee, an official Committee of Montgomery County. This new status makes our efforts to combat human trafficking permanent and provides us with voting members who have the power to set policy and direction for the Committee.

We have also expanded the number of Committees on which our Commissioners serve with the addition of the Public Relations/Communications Committee, the Budget Committee and the Emerging Leaders Committee. These new additions have professionalized our budget operations, acknowledged the growth of our youth outreach programs, and helped publicize our activities to the community through social media and other communications efforts.

We also hosted another successful Women's Legislative Briefing, with a record number of attendees this year and a growing number of sponsors. We continued our legislative advocacy on behalf of a variety of bills important to women's lives in the Maryland General Assembly.

Of note, we had 44 applicants for our three Commissioner spots this year. This record number of applicants indicates a growing awareness of the Commission and its important work as well as growing interest in participating.

I am extremely proud of our accomplishments outlined in this report and sincerely appreciate the hard work of the 15 commissioners who volunteer their time and talents to make a difference in our community. It is an honor to serve as the President of this group of dedicated and talented women who volunteer their time and talents to advocate for the women and girls of Montgomery County.

## Executive Director's Report



Jodi Finkelstein

In 1972, the Montgomery County Council passed a law establishing the Montgomery County Commission for Women. That law charges the Commission with the responsibility of advising the County Executive, the County Council, the public, and the agencies of the county, state and federal governments on the issues of concern to women.

The law provides that there will be 15 commissioners, county residents who are each appointed to three-year terms and serve without compensation. Nine of the commissioners must be endorsed by organizations concerned with women's issues and six must serve independently. The Commission meets monthly, and commissioners meet in committees in the interim to work on various projects and initiatives. On average, it is estimated that commissioners contribute about four hours each week working on behalf of Montgomery County's women and girls.

The Commission was created to advance women's equal and full participation in the benefits, responsibilities and opportunities of society. Though it is no longer 1972, we, unfortunately, are still debating many of the same issues. For example, Maryland is just one of six states that still grant rapists parental rights should they impregnate their victim. And, up until this year, prosecutors had to show that victims used physical resistance to prosecute a rapist. The "No Means No" law passed with minimal debate. Many advocates made this possible and included support and testimony from Montgomery County Commissioner Daphnee Cherubin.

Another focus for the Commission year was programming. This year we proudly introduced the Girl Power Essay Contest to celebrate Women's History Month in March. The contest asked Montgomery County residents to submit personal statements about what it means to be a woman in 2017. Over 106 people entered the contest across four categories of competition: elementary school, middle school, high school and adult.

The pages that follow highlight additional work of the Commission in FY 17. It was filled with a great deal of advocacy and outreach on behalf of girls and women in Montgomery County.

### III. 2017 Strategic Priorities

In September 2016, the Commission established a set of priorities to guide its fiscal operating year. The purpose of this was to narrow the CFW's work while responding to the needs of the County in a comprehensive and more measurable way. The priorities are:

- a) Economic Empowerment, including financial literacy and equity in pay and benefits
- b) Unique Challenges, including re-entry women and immigrant women
- c) Under-Representation in the Workforce & Education, including STEAM and careers as first responders and in trade work
- d) Fairness in Family Law, including divorce/separation, custody and visitation issues and access to affordable representation

These priorities were informed by County Executive initiatives, fiscal year 2016 legislative priorities, the Office of Community Partnerships suggestions, information and referral inquiries received by the CFW office, and key themes gleaned from the CFW's Listening Tour. While a wide range of topics were raised in these engaging discussions with women and men around the County, the themes focused on:

- Prevention of violence against women and support for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault
- Education and support of young women – financial literacy and other life skills; prevention of sexual assault; K-12, and post-secondary education support; prevention of drug and alcohol abuse; etc. (See notes)
- Service and resources for women living in poverty including housing, child care, healthcare, fair employment practices, transportation, safe neighborhoods
- Services and resources for immigrant women including those to help overcome isolation; to allow for means to redress unfair workplace practices; and to have support for preventing domestic violence and sexual assault
- Services and resources for senior women – housing, healthcare, transportation, safe neighborhoods
- Fair employment practices



With the following recommendations for the CFW:

- Collaborate with other service and resource organizations;
- Become the streamlined source of information for the community on the range of resources and services available for women and families. Connect women with the services and resources they need; and
- Collect and analyze data relevant to women's issues including outcomes of new legislation.

Because of the Commission's increased focus on strategy and results, the CFW formed a new Strategic Planning Committee, later renamed the Research & Evaluation Committee. The initiating Committee Chair was Beatrice Lauman, and Commissioners serving on the Committee included Daphnee Cherubin, Britt Hogue, Farah Nageer-Kanthor, Karmen Rouland, and Diana Rubin. The purpose of this committee is to move the CFW toward more outcomes-focused work whose results can be measured and evaluated for effectiveness and to be a reliable resource for Montgomery County Council, state legislators and the public, informing all stakeholders about the state of women in Montgomery County.



#### IV. Committees & Working Groups

##### a. **Policy & Legislation (PAL) Committee - 2017 State Legislative Agenda**

**Chair: Karmen Rouland**

**Committee Members:** Nicole Drew, Lorna Forde, Giulia McPherson, Diana Rubin, Katie Smith

The Policy & Legislation Committee works throughout the year to understand the needs of women and families in Montgomery County and build relationships with elected officials and partner organizations. Leading up to the legislative session, the Committee surveys the Commission to identify legislation that the CFW will support, aligned with the established strategic priorities. While the Maryland State Legislature is in session, the Commission advocates by providing testimony, writing letters and making calls of support to legislators, and participating in community organizing events.

While the opinions expressed in the positions declared by the CFW are not necessarily those of the County Executive or County Council, the Commission shapes its policy agenda based on what it believes will provide better conditions and a better future for Montgomery County's women, girls, and families. The following bills were supported by the CFW during the 2017 Maryland State Legislative Session:

#### **HB 1/SB 230 \* Labor and Employment - Maryland Healthy Working Families Act**

The legislation, which was introduced for the first time in 2013, requires Maryland employers to allow workers to earn a certain number of annual paid sick and safe days. The "safe time" component of the legislation requires employers to allow employees who have been victims of domestic abuse or sexual assault to use their accrued paid sick leave to care for their health after these incidents or to seek legal protections or new housing.

**Outcome: PASSED**

#### **HB 429/SB 217 \* Criminal Law - Sexual Offenses - Physical Resistance**

This bill clarifies and modernizes Maryland's sex crimes statutes by making it clear that rape victims are not required to physically resist sexual assault.

**Outcome: PASSED**

#### **HB 428/SB 574 \* Family Law - Child Conceived Without Consent - Termination of Parental Rights (Rape Survivor Family Protection Act)**

The Rape Survivor Family Protection Act would create a legal process for rape victims to terminate the parental rights of rapists when a child is conceived as result of rape. Victims would be required to meet a clear and convincing standard of evidence. This is the same standard used for other termination of parental rights cases.

**Outcome: Passed House and Senate in different forms; failed in conference committee on Sine Die**

#### **HB 919/SB 971 \* Procurement - Nondiscrimination Clauses and State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination**

This bill prevented corporations seeking to contract with the state from discriminating against women when appointing members to their Board of Directors. Leading authorities on pay equity believe that placing more women on corporate boards will influence better compensation policies and practices and offer a diversity of perspectives and experience.



**Outcome:** [Passed Senate but failed in House.](#)

**[HB 398/SB 404](#) \* Labor and Employment - Equal Pay - Job Announcement and Salary History Information Disclosures**

This bill prohibited discriminatory practices and increased transparency from employers when hiring women. Employers could not ask past salary history and employers over a certain size would have to disclose a salary range for the position when requested by the applicant. This bill would address the perpetuation of gender pay disparities by not relying on a job candidate's prior salary in hiring or setting pay.

**Outcome:** [Unfavorable report in Senate Finance Committee.](#)

**[HB 1614/SB 1116](#) \* Maryland Fair Scheduling, Wages and Benefits Act and [HB1615/SB1145](#) \* Maryland Fair Scheduling Act**

This bill would provide baseline protections, like advance notice of work schedules, predictability pay for last minute schedule changes, and compensation for on-call shifts, to incentivize employers to create stable, predictable schedules and to ensure that employees are compensated for their time and flexibility.

**Outcome:** [No vote in committees.](#)

**[HB 214](#) \* Discrimination in Employment - Conditions Related to Pregnancy or Childbirth**

This bill made clarifications to Maryland's existing law to ensure that pregnant workers with a medical need for workplace accommodations due to normal pregnancy are in fact provided reasonable accommodations. It would also strengthen the law by clarifying that reasonable accommodations must also be provided for lactation-related needs. It would also strengthen the law to prohibit employers from forcing pregnant workers out on leave when they could be reasonably accommodated since many women cannot afford or do not want to take leave and could continue working if they were provided another reasonable accommodation. **Outcome:** [No vote in committee](#)

## **B. 2017 Women's Legislative Briefing**

**Planning Committee Co-Chairs, Debra Bright Harris, Ed.D. and Katie Smith**

**Commission Committee Members:** Karmen Rouland, EL Co-Chair; Angela Whitehead Quigley, EL Co-Chair; Daphnee Cherubin; Nicole Drew

The 37<sup>th</sup> annual Women's Legislative Briefing, entitled, ***New Visions, New Voices: Building Our Future Together***, was held on Sunday, January 29, 2017 at the Universities of Shady Grove in Rockville. The purpose of the briefing was to inform Marylanders about state and federal legislative proposals of concern to women and families and to build strong advocacy on these issues. More than 700 people attended the briefing, including teens in the Emerging Leaders track.

The Montgomery County Commission for Women, with the assistance of 53 women's and community organizations, planned the program. Many of these organizations presented informative exhibits lining the hallways leading to the main conference auditorium, highlighting ways to get involved with their efforts and distributing valuable information. The briefing was made possible by funding and support from our Topaz Sponsor, AARP, and our Opal Sponsors, Federal TransFERS, LLC, the Maryland Commission for Women, Maryland National Organization for Women and the National Ovarian Cancer Coalition.

A pre-conference President's Networking Session provided the leaders of the 53 community organizations that cosponsored the briefing and members of the Montgomery Commission for Women with the opportunity to discuss best practices for collaboration on issues affecting women and families in Maryland. It also provided a mechanism for the leaders of these groups to identify potential community partners who were addressing similar issues or implementing similar projects.

The Plenary Session opened with greetings from Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett. Others giving greetings included Lorna Forde, Chair and President of the Montgomery County Commission for Women, The Honorable Rushern Baker III, the Prince George's County Executive, Commissioners Debra Bright Harris and Katie Smith, Co-Chairs of the Women's Legislative Briefing, Senator Chris Van Hollen, Congressmen John Delaney, Jamie Raskin and John Sarbanes, and an Emerging Leaders representative.

The Plenary Panel: *New Visions, New Voices: Building our Future Together* was moderated by Jennifer Jones, President, Prince George's County Commission for Women. The Honorable Aruna Miller, Chair of the Women's Caucus of the Maryland House of Delegates, Kate Nielson, State Policy Analyst for AAUW, Maya Raghu, Director of Workplace Equality for the National Women's Law Center and Denise DeMichele-Bailin, Federal Strategy Advisor for AARP, rounded out the panel. There was a lively discussion of how the current political climate affected the chance of success on various legislation and how advocates could maximize their efforts given the on-the-ground realities.

The opening session was followed by sessions in two tracks, each featuring legislators, prominent advocates and experts in their fields. The first track featured the following seminars:

- Economic Justice & Opportunity, Health Care justice & Equality;

- Unique Populations & Emerging Issues; and
- The Nuts & Bolts of Creating Change in Your Community.

The second track included the following seminars:

- Law Enforcement & Our Community;
- Safety & Justice for Women;
- Life Reimagined: The Age of Possibilities; and
- Challenges & Triumphs of Women in Non-Traditional Fields.

For the third year in a row, the Commission sponsored a separate track for Emerging Leaders. Seminars included:

- Using Technology to Shape Your World, and
- Innovate, Advocate, Lead: Developing an Action Plan.

These separate tracks were well-received by the emerging leaders present.



### C) Human Trafficking Task Force

Chair: Commissioner Bobbe Mintz

In 2014, County Executive Ike Leggett created the Montgomery County Human Trafficking Task Force. The purpose of the task force is to increase understanding of the issue in Montgomery County and to develop inter-agency coordination of strategies for response and prevention. Overarching goals of the Task Force are completed through three subcommittees: Education & Outreach, Legislative, and Victim Services.

The goals of the Task Force include:

- Increasing the identification and prosecution of all parties supporting the organized crime of human trafficking to include traffickers, suppliers, transporters, advertisers and demand elements
- Elimination of human trafficking
- Improving identification of and services for human trafficking victims

Organized and chaired by the Montgomery County Commission for Women, the Task Force includes, but is not limited to, government and non-government agencies and organizations, as well as a host of individual community members and ex-officio organizations.



## D) Programming Committee

**Co-Chairs:** Nicole Drew, Britt Hogue

**Committee Members:** Debra Bright Harris; Daphnee Cherubin; Tracy Evans; Donna Rojas; Angela Whitehead Quigley

The CFW's 2017 programming offered 16 seminars, serving over 140 residents. Seminars focused on topics reflecting the Commissions priorities, providing a variety of workshops designed to educate and empower participants

- Economic Empowerment
  - Financial Independence for Women
  - Financial Planning
  - Retirement Planning
  
- Health and Safety
  - Self Defense
  - Healthy Dating/Relationships
  
- Unique Challenges
  - Transition Planning
  
- Under-Representation in the Workforce & Education
  - Finding Your Brand
  
- Fairness in Family Law
  - Separation and Divorce
  - Divorce/Separation and Custody Law

The CFW's Emerging Leaders program continued to grow as a critical body of work of the Commission, providing a variety of programs for middle- and high-school girls in the County on topics such as advocacy and healthy teen relationships. As a result of its impressive growth, and the CFW's commitment to engaging and advancing young women, this program was voted into a standing Emerging Leaders Committee going starting in fiscal 2018.

## Girl Power Essay Contest

In honor of Women's History Month, the CFW launched the first of what aims to be a recurring initiative to engage residents around the County in a discussion about the power of women in our nation. The contest asking women and girls, as well as men and boys, to submit personal statements about what it means to be a woman in 2017 kicked off in March. Throughout the month, the Commission received 106 entries across four categories of competition: elementary school, middle school, high school, and adult.

At the Commission's June meeting, President Forde welcomed the 2017 Girl Power Essay Contest winners and commissioners introduced themselves. County Executive Leggett attended the reception and took pictures with the contest winners and commissioners. Commissioners Evans and Drew provided background on the contest and presented awards with President Forde.



E) **CFW STEM Scholarship**

**Chair:** Beatrice Lauman

**Committee Members:** Debra Bright Harris; Farah Nageer-Kanthor

The Commission was pleased to award its Commission for Women STEM Endowed Scholarship, which recognizes high-performing students in need who are majoring in STEM disciplines, to Glady Mae Llanto. Ms. Llanto, a third-year student at Montgomery College, was the second recipient of this \$500 scholarship.

V. **Other Business & Events**

e) By-Laws Ad Hoc Committee

**Co-Chairs:** Angela Whitehead Quigley & Katie Smith

**Committee Members:** Nicole Drew; Debra Bright Harris; Lorna Forde

Throughout Fiscal 2017, the ad hoc Bylaws Committee worked to review the Commissions bylaws and in May 2017 made a series of recommendations to the full body for consideration.

- f) During the September planning meeting, the Commission voted to institute the Budget Committee a Standing Committee going into Fiscal 2018. The purpose of this committee is to ensure that the Commission has full visibility into the budget and takes advantage of appropriate opportunities to discuss funding for its initiatives with the County Executive and County Council. The Budget Committee will also create processes for requesting and approving funds for special purposes and sponsorship opportunities.

**Chair:** Bobbe Mintz

**Committee Members:** Giulia McPherson, Farah Nageer-Kanthor

## **VI. Looking Forward**

As we look toward the coming year, the Commission is excited for what the future holds for women and girls in Montgomery County, Maryland, and the Country. The political climate in Washington has presented challenges and opportunities for women, and upcoming changes to political leadership in Maryland and Montgomery County will offer ways for residents to make their voice heard and get involved in their community. As a bi-partisan organization, the Commission for Women's only aim is to ensure that the needs of women are heard and addressed.

We look forward to continuing our commitment to be a data- and impact-driven organization, by being working through a set of priorities that have been established by listening to our community. We will work hard to engage residents through our new partnerships with community organizations, through our virtual outreach and programs, and with multiple language capabilities, to serve not only more women and families, but more diverse women and families.