

Montgomery County Commission for Women

Strategic Plan for FY 2026 – 2028



Executive Summary

Montgomery County is proud to be a leader among local governments in protecting the civil rights of all citizens and lifting up all its communities. The Montgomery County Commission for Women (CFW) was created to empower women in Montgomery County by advancing their equal and full participation in society's benefits, responsibilities, and opportunities. CFW seeks to achieve this through education, policy influence, and harnessing women's economic and political power.

To that end, CFW presents this *Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026 - 2028* that serves as a living roadmap to guide CFW's efforts in advancing the status of women in Montgomery County. With its theme of "*Empowering All Voices*," the plan outlines actionable goals and objectives coupled with target metrics to gauge progress. The three strategic goals are:

- Promote women's economic opportunity and financial literacy
- Empower women in politics, government, and leadership
- Ensure equity in women's health, safety, and education

This plan provides a flexible framework for addressing current and emerging issues over the next three years and will be implemented in collaboration with its sister boards and commissions, government agencies, and educational institutions. The goals and objectives will be measured annually against target performance and result-oriented outcome metrics that may be modified as needed.

Background: Legislative Origin and Context

The Commission for Women was born during a pivotal era for women's rights both nationally and locally. In April 1972, the Maryland General Assembly passed the state Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which was ratified by voters later that year. Within this climate of reform, Montgomery County leaders recognized the need for a formal body to identify and remedy systemic gender-based inequities. An Ad Hoc Committee was formed to study the status of women in the County, and its recommendation led directly to legislation creating the CFW.

The Montgomery County Commission for Women was established in 1972 under Montgomery County Code Sec. 27-27 through 27-31 as both a department of County government and an advisory board. Comprising 15 community members appointed by the County Executive and

confirmed by the County Council, the CFW is dedicated to ensuring that every person in Montgomery County can live and work with dignity, free from prejudice and discrimination.

Legislative Mandate

Under Chapter 27 of the County Code, the Commission is charged with the responsibility to:

- Serve as a primary advisor to the County Executive, the County Council, and the public on issues of concern to women.
- Review laws, policies, and practices to identify gender-based disparities.
- Advocate for solutions that eliminate discrimination or prejudice based on sex.
- Enable women to participate as equals in the community through the acquisition of skills, information, and resources.

For over 50 years, the CFW has served as a bridge between the community and government, evolving from an early focus on domestic legal protections and credit access to contemporary priorities including pay equity, STEM representation, and access to health care.

Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision

A Montgomery County where women and girls participate fully in every aspect of community living, possessing the political and economic power to thrive.

Mission

To advance women's equal and full participation in society's benefits, responsibilities, and opportunities and to enable women to participate as equals in the community through the acquisition of skills and competencies, information, and resources, and harness women's economic and political power, promote social inclusion, influence policies, and enhance the health and safety of women in the community.

Core Values

Every person has equal value and dignity and should live and work in a safe and healthy community free from prejudice and discrimination.

Every person should have equal access to resources, including information, healthcare, education, and the opportunity to participate and thrive.

The voices of girls and women should be amplified to harness their collective power and demand equity, inclusion, and representation.

Strategic Context

In developing the Commission's three-year strategic goals and objectives, CFW conducted an environmental scan and modified SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) by reviewing key reports on the status of women in Montgomery County. These reports included but are not limited to:

- Montgomery County Biennial Gender-Based Pay Equity Analysis (MC OHR 2023)
- Profile of Women in Montgomery County (Montgomery Planning Research and Strategic Projects Division 2022)
- Community Needs Assessment 2022-2025 (MC DHHS 2025)
- A Tale of Two Counties: The Status of Women in Montgomery County Report (CFW 2018)

After reviewing the findings of these reports and consulting other Montgomery County resources, the Commission identified three strategic goals aimed at addressing the needs and exigencies. Some of the findings that informed this Strategic Plan include:

- Median incomes are lowest among single-parent households headed by a woman.
- Women experience poverty at higher rates than men (female poverty rate was 7.43%, compared to male poverty rate of 5.69% (American Community Survey (2016-2020).
- Women in Montgomery County continue to experience a pay gap compared to men, earning 89% of men's pay for overall full-time employment.
- While women are well represented in Montgomery County Council seats, state-level representation and board appointments remain areas for growth.
- Significant health disparities persist, particularly for African American and Hispanic women regarding preventive care and maternal health.
- The county rate of sexually transmitted infections was twice the rate of the state increase in 2017.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

The goals, objectives, and key action strategies of the CFW Strategic Plan appear below:

GOAL 1: Promote Economic Opportunity & Financial Security

- **OBJECTIVES:**
 - Increase Women's Financial Literacy
 - Improve Women's Representation in Underrepresented Occupations
 - Expand Telework, Child Care, and Flexible Work Opportunities
- **KEY STRATEGIES:**
 - Close gender gaps in financial literacy through financial wellness seminars



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN STRATEGIC PLAN

- Partner with the Universities at Shady Grove to improve women's access to STEM programs
- Advocate for telework and flexible work policies in County agencies
- **DESIRED RESULTS:**
 - Increased financial literacy of women in Montgomery County
 - Decrease in women's poverty rate in Montgomery County
 - Increase in utilization of women in STEM and other professional occupations

GOAL 2: Empower Women in Politics, Government, and Leadership

- **OBJECTIVES:**
 - Support Women in Government and Corporate Leadership
 - Improve Women's Representation in Public Office, Boards & Commissions
 - Increase Women's Engagement in the Voting and Electoral Process
- **KEY STRATEGIES:**
 - Host an annual Women's Legislative Briefing and Lobby Day
 - Collaborate with business roundtables and universities to implement leadership development, mentoring and networking programs
 - Perform focused outreach to recruit women for County Board and commission vacancies.
- **DESIRED RESULTS:**
 - Improved representation of women on County Boards and in government leadership roles
 - Increased engagement of women in electoral process and political activity
 - Increase in women in leadership roles in Montgomery County



GOAL 3: Ensure Equity in Health, Safety, and Education

- **OBJECTIVES**
 - Provide Equal Access to Health Care for Women
 - Provide Tools and Resources for Women's Safety
 - Eliminate Barriers to Higher Education for Women
- **KEY STRATEGIES:**
 - Identify resources for the un- or under-insured women impacted by Federal layoffs
 - Promote menopause education in partnership with the Commission on Aging
 - Continue to host women's self-defense workshops



- **DESIRED RESULTS:**

- Reduced number of uninsured women in Montgomery County
- Reduced incidence of human trafficking events and violent assaults against women
- Increased representation of women in STEM and professional postsecondary education

2026 Legislative Priorities

As part of its strategy to enhance legal protections for women in Montgomery County, the CFW will advocate for the critical state legislation by providing testimony. These bills include:

- Maryland Caregiver Employment Protection Act
- Prescription Privacy Protection Act for Abortion Medication
- Study Stipend to Caregivers
- Coerced Debt Bill
- Stop Silencing Survivors
- Family and Law Enforcement Protection Act
- Timing of Hearings between TPO and FPO, and Relief for Financial Loss
- Birth Certificate Modernization Act
- Monica Cooper Prelease Act

Program Metrics

To monitor the efficacy of its Strategic Plan, the CFW will meet regularly to identify and assess progress toward its target metrics. CFW will publish an annual report presenting the status of relevant program measures and will adjust its strategies accordingly. Ultimately by 2028, the Commission aims to see a measurable decrease in women's poverty rate, improved representation of women in underrepresented occupations and on County Boards, and increased engagement and representation of women in the electoral process.

Conclusion

Montgomery County has been a model jurisdiction for the advancement of civil rights and gender equity in the State of Maryland and beyond. However, our work is not done as long as challenges remain. The Commission for Women will continue to be in the vanguard of championing the rights of women and amplifying the voice of all marginalized communities whose rights are threatened. This Strategic Plan serves as one instrument to accomplish this. Join us in the journey.