



MLAW
Maryland Legislative
Agenda for Women

2023 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



1994 - 2023

29 Years of Advocacy for Women's and Family Issues

MLAW is the only statewide coalition of women's groups and individuals that provides a non-partisan, independent voice for Maryland women and families. MLAW harnesses the **collective power of women** by mobilizing, coordinating and collaborating with networks, groups, and individuals from all over the state to **advocate for the passage of legislation to promote and protect the well-being of women and their families in Maryland.**

This call to action for legislative change has resulted in a coalition almost unique in the United States. The annual legislative conference and other activities have energized thousands of women, and male allies, to become engaged in advocacy for important issues affecting Maryland women and families.

The annual Legislative Agenda has included a broad diversity of issues and the organization's advocacy and collaborative efforts have resulted in the **passage of 105 pieces of legislation enacted by the Maryland General Assembly** since its inception.

This extraordinary success has made a **significant difference for women and families.** It has established MLAW as a **powerful voice for women and their priorities in Maryland.**

MLAW provides visibility for legislation affecting women and families. The fall conference develops our MLAW Legislative Agenda and an annual legislative briefing during the legislative session introduces the Agenda to advocates and legislators. These events focus legislators' attention on our issues and raise their visibility throughout the state. We distribute the annual Legislative Agenda to every Maryland legislator. In collaboration with our advocacy partners, we submit testimony, advocate for bills, and promote our Agenda through our large e-mail list, website, and Facebook page.

The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women is proud of its achievements during the last 29 years, but there is more to be done. **Join us and help us continue to make a difference for Maryland women and families.**



Overview

The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) is a statewide coalition of women's groups and individuals formed to provide a non-partisan, independent voice for Maryland women and families. The coalition advocates for progressive legislation and policies that promote and protect the well-being of Maryland women and their families and provide them opportunities to develop their full potential.

Our Vision

Maryland women and their families have a right, by law, to an adequate and sustainable quality of life and an opportunity to develop their full potential.

Guiding Principles

- An adequate standard of living regardless of ability to work or achieve financial independence
- Personal safety at home, school and the workplace
- Freedom from discrimination in Maryland's economic, educational, judicial, political, and social system
- Equal access to quality health care and reproductive services
- Safe and affordable child and dependent care
- A quality, public education
- Equitable and responsible implementation and enforcement of rights and protections provided by existing law
- Elimination of discriminatory policies and practices based on age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities and attributes, race, and sexual orientation
- Family-friendly employment practices

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Statement on Racism

The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) unequivocally supports the Black Lives Matter movement and stands in solidarity with African American communities as an ally in the fight against systemic racism, racial injustice, and discrimination.

Diversity and equity are two of the core values through which MLAW strongly advocates for its legislative priorities centered around addressing issues of concern to women and that also disproportionately affect communities of color.

Too often, well-intended advocacy efforts ignore the unique challenges of the very communities the efforts aim to support. We are committed to ensuring that we are not just opposed to systemic racism and racist policies, but that we as an organization are actively working towards anti-racist solutions. As we work collaboratively with our members and partner networks towards solutions, we will be more deliberate about establishing meaningful relationships and dialogue with the communities being supported.

To that end, the MLAW Board of Directors will ensure the following:

1. All legislative proposals submitted for consideration for the annual MLAW Legislative Agenda must include information about racial impact and be reviewed by the Board of Directors using a racial equity lens.
2. The MLAW Legislative Agenda will include at least one racial equity bill per legislative session.
3. Presenters, sponsors, and advocates for proposed legislation and attendees at our events will be representative of the diverse and wonderful communities that we seek to uplift and support.
4. MLAW's Board of Directors and membership will represent diversity in perspectives, ideas, culture, backgrounds, race, and ethnicity.
5. MLAW will ensure broader and consistent outreach to gain a more diverse membership and increase engagement in MLAW's education and advocacy efforts.

For 29 years MLAW has provided a non-partisan, independent voice for Maryland women and families, and we will continue to strive to be an organization that is committed to advocating for anti-racist, progressive legislation and policies that promote and protect the well being of Maryland women and their families and provides them opportunities to develop their full potential.



Statement on Roe vs. Wade

The SCOTUS decision to overturn Roe v. Wade is a devastating blow to a fundamental human right that people in this country have been able to access for decades and generations. Removing access to abortion will have dire—life-threatening—consequences for women across this country. Overturning 50 years of precedent significantly undermines reproductive freedom and a woman’s bodily autonomy.

The evisceration of this human right significantly limits health care for women, deepens racial disparities, will increase maternal mortality rates, and will have particularly dangerous consequences for low-income women and women of color. The travesty of this politicized decision will overwhelm mental health services, foster care providers and social services agencies with potentially disastrous outcomes.

Forcing pregnant people and minors to carry a pregnancy to term, regardless of circumstance, or worse, having to prove that a rape or incest has occurred, is not only invasive but unnecessarily cruel and dehumanizing. Women deserve better than that.

Make no mistake, this decision is just the tip of the iceberg to take away the most basic human rights, and we stand ready to work with our partners in protecting the autonomy and privacy of Marylanders' lives.

We are proud to have supported the successfully passed Abortion Care Access Act in the 2022 legislative session. This bill, which will expand abortion providers and training, will be necessary to help ensure that Maryland women as well as pregnant people who come to Maryland from across the country receive the vital care they need when they are making the most deeply personal choices of their lives.

As we have for decades, MLAW will continue to support Marylanders' full autonomy and vociferously put our full weight behind supporting Marylanders' access to abortion.

2023 MLAW SUPPORTERS

Organizations

AAUW Anne Arundel County
AAUW Howard County
AAUW Maryland
Advocacy and Training Center
Allegany County Women's Action Coalition
Anne Arundel County NOW
Aspire Ascend
Baltimore County State Democratic Central Committee
Bound for Better
Business and Professional Women of Maryland
Climate Xchange Maryland
Drake Institute of Women's Policy
Empowered Women in Business International
For All Seasons, Inc.
Kensington-Rockville AAUW
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA)
Maryland Commission for Women
Maryland NOW
Maryland WISE Women
Miller Partnership Consultants LLC
MoCoWoMen
Montgomery County Business & Professional Women (MC BPW)
Montgomery County Chapter, National Organization for Women
Montgomery County Commission for Women
Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Prince George's County Chapter
Planned Parenthood of Maryland
Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington, DC
Reproductive Justice Inside
Southern Prince George's Business and Professional Women
Women's Democratic League of Frederick County
Women's Equity Center and Action Network (WE CAN)
Women's Law Center of Maryland
Zonta Club of Annapolis

Individuals

Susan Anderson
Wandra Ashley-Williams
Lee Bachu
Diana M Bailey
Torri Ball
Delegate Sandy Bartlett
Mae A. Beale
Sandy Bell
Kara D. Beverly
Shruti Bhatnagar
Erin Bradley
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Sabrina Clark, Ph.D.
Michaele Cohen
Patricia Cornish
Sylvia Crowder
Beatrice Dane
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Ramonda Davis
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Beth Anne Dorman
Linda Dorsey Walker
Sarah Dwyer
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Joanne Gallos
Barbara Gardner
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Lee Ann Harty
Molly Hauck
Kimberly Haven
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Gail Holm
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Sharon Jacob
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Elizabeth Joyce
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Melanie Miller
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Deborah A. Mitchell
Jan Molino
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Kayla Morgan
Pilar Morgan
Joyce Moyer
Patricia Nicholls
Pat Nordstrom
Gary Norman
Jo-Ann Orlinsky
Jana Owens
Yvonne Perret
Diana Philip
Linda Pickle
Heather Reichardt
Anita Riley

Maria Roberts
Diane Roca
Lorraine K Rogers
Anita Rosen
Cynthia Rubenstein
Diana Rubin
Laure Ruth
Jennifer Scott, Esquire
Shuchi Sharma
Michelle Siri
Mishawn Smith
Symbolie Smith
Mary Sobray
Toni St. John
Carol Starr
Joan Stine
Ioana Stoica
Barbara Taylor
Bonnie Thomas
Judith Vaughan-Prather
Destiny Drake West
Lara Westdorp
Cynthia Williams
Dianne Williams
Michael Wilson
Rebecca Wise
Rev. Jasina Barber Wise
Teresa Woorman

Sign-ons as of 1/23/23

**The names of individuals and organizational supporters may only support some components of the agenda that pertain to their mission and work.*



2023 Agenda Process and Bill Selection

In November, MLAW hosted its Fall Agenda Conference. Advocacy and women's groups were invited to present legislative initiatives for consideration. The criteria for initiatives to be presented at the conference were:

- Addresses an issue related to women's health, women's personal safety at home, in public, in school, and in the workplace; the ability to achieve and maintain economic independence; or freedom from discrimination in Maryland's economic, educational, judicial, political, and social system;
- Can be addressed through the legislation in the Maryland General Assembly;
- Has a reasonable chance to move successfully through the legislative process;
- Has an identifiable, sustainable lead group that can shepherd the bill.
- The lead group must:
 - Be a Maryland-based group or a national group with a strong on-the-ground presence in Maryland;
 - Have issue-area expertise and/or a track record of supporting legislation/advocacy in areas related to this proposal;
 - Have an identified representative who will be in regular contact with the MLAW Board of Directors about the progress of the legislation; and
 - Regularly provide legislative updates and supportive materials for MLAW to share with our members so that they can take action.

Last year we added a requirement that all legislative proposals submitted for consideration for the annual MLAW Legislative Agenda must include information about racial impact and be reviewed by the Board of Directors using a racial equity lens.

Following a successful conference, the Board of Directors met to review the legislation and ensure that it met the criteria. Bills that met the criteria were placed on a ballot, which was distributed to the MLAW membership. Members were asked to vote for the initiatives that would comprise the **2023 Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women**.



Reproductive Health Protection Act

Bill Number: TBD

One Sentence Synopsis: This legislation will create protections in our laws for pregnant individuals seeking abortion care, as well as those providing support to pregnant individuals (including health care providers, support organizations, and volunteers), from civil, criminal, and administrative liability.

Committees: Senate Judicial Proceedings/Senate Finance, and House Judiciary/House Health and Government Operations

Lead Sponsors: Senator Will Smith, Delegates Nicole Williams, and Delegate Terri Hill

Lead Group: Women's Law Center of Maryland

Lead Group Contact: Michelle Siri, Executive Director

Describe the problem:

In the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* in overturning *Roe v. Wade*, it is anticipated that nearly half the states will outlaw or severely restrict the right to abortion care. In the six months since *Dobbs*, fourteen states have banned nearly all abortion care, and some of those states have enacted laws that create liability for anyone assisting their residents obtain abortion care even in states where abortion remains legal. These laws are designed to intimidate people seeking abortion care, as well as volunteers and health care providers supporting out-of-state patients. The Reproductive Health Protection Act will counteract these extreme efforts by ensuring patients, providers, and support networks cannot be subject to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties within Maryland for supporting the provision of abortion care.

Describe your proposed legislation:

This shielding bill will protect individuals seeking abortion care in Maryland from criminal, civil, and administrative liability from their home states. It will also support continued access to care for Maryland residents by ensuring health care providers and supportive organizations and individuals can continue to operate without legal threats from other states.

Benefit to Communities of Color:

Yes. Communities of color are particularly impacted by limitations on abortion access. As we know, significant racial and ethnic disparities persist for a wide range of health outcomes, from diabetes to heart disease to breast and cervical cancer to sexually transmitted infections (STI), including HIV. This is also true for unintended pregnancies. Unnecessary barriers to abortion care increase costs and wait times, further exacerbating existing health disparities and economic injustices. The criminal justice system has been disproportionately abused to negatively impact People of Color and empowering citizenry in states to target anyone who has received or is suspected of receiving or providing abortion care increases the very real risks to those communities.



Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Liberty

Bill Number: TBD

One Sentence Synopsis: This legislation will lead to a ballot measure to create a constitutional amendment to protect the rights of individuals to make their own reproductive health decisions in Maryland.

Committees: Senate Finance, House Health and Government Operations

Lead Sponsors: House Speaker Adrienne Jones

Lead Group: Planned Parenthood of Maryland

Lead Group Contact: Robyn Elliott

Describe the problem:

In the months following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*, which overturned the seminal case *Roe v. Wade* after nearly 50 years, we have already seen 14 states ban almost all abortion care, with another 9 poised to enact restrictions so severe as to essentially prohibit any abortions in those states. Many in Maryland think of our state as a "safe state" and that we are immune from the impact of the *Dobbs* decision. It is true that we are safer than states like Texas which have enacted a near total abortion ban or our neighboring state of West Virginia which has banned abortions at all stages of pregnancy. But the truth is that our statutory protections only create a legal buffer against the erosion of our rights in Maryland.

Marylanders' reproductive freedom has historically been protected by a layering of Maryland law, Maryland's constitution, federal law, and the U.S. Constitution. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court no longer recognizes that the fundamental right to privacy protects our ability to make our own reproductive health provisions, leaving the decision to regulate abortion up to individual states without the additional constitutional protection. This means Maryland's statutory right to abortion is vulnerable, as well as other rights related to privacy that we take for granted here. Campaigns in other states to erode abortion rights have lasted decades, with incremental changes gained slowly over long periods of time. *Dobbs* was not overturned overnight but was part of a decades-long operation to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. While we are confident in our legislature's ability to maintain our right to reproductive freedom it would be foolish to believe that ability will last indefinitely.

Furthermore, the right to privacy was recognized not just in the landmark case of *Roe v. Wade*. It has also been the underpinning of cases like *Griswold v Connecticut* in which the Court found in 1965 that married couples had a fundamental right to privacy to make their own birth control decisions. And in 1972, the Court reaffirmed the right to privacy to make birth control decisions and extended those rights to unmarried couples through the Court's findings in *Eisenstadt v. Baird*. Due to the Court's decision in *Dobbs*, we are witnessing the most rapid unraveling of civil rights in our lifetime. And it's not

just abortion at stake. Even our rights to make birth control decisions may be at risk because so many prior U.S. Court decisions depend on the legal underpinning of the right to privacy. Indeed, Justice Clarence Thomas, in his concurrence in the Dobbs case stated “in future cases, we should reconsider all of this Court’s substantive due process precedents, including Griswold, Lawrence, and Obergefell. Because any substantive due process decision is ‘demonstrably erroneous.’” Thus, Dobbs could be just the first case in a long list of cases designed to constrict our reproductive freedoms and civil liberties.

Describe your proposed legislation:

This legislation would enable a ballot measure to constitutionally enshrine the rights of Marylanders to reproductive freedom. Specifically, the bill recognizes that a central component of an individual’s rights to liberty and equality includes the fundamental right to reproductive liberty. This includes the right to make decisions and choices regarding their own reproduction, including decisions related to preventing, continuing, or terminating a pregnancy. Significantly, the bill also states that those rights may only be abridge if “justified by a compelling state interest achieved by the least restrictive means.” A constitutional amendment is the strongest protection we could provide to ensure future generations of Marylanders have meaningful access to the full range of reproduction health care, from birth control to infertility treatments, to abortion. And by including a strict scrutiny standard, i.e., by explicitly requiring that the “state may not, directly or indirectly, deny, burden, or abridge the right unless justified by a compelling state interest achieved by the least restrictive means,” we would ensure that the right to reproductive liberty is unequivocal.

Benefit to Communities of Color:

Yes. Communities of color are particularly impacted by limitations on abortion access. As we know, significant racial and ethnic disparities persist for a wide range of health outcomes, from diabetes to heart disease to breast and cervical cancer to sexually transmitted infections (STI), including HIV. This is also true for unintended pregnancies. Unnecessary barriers to abortion care increase costs and wait times, further exacerbating existing health disparities and economic injustices. The criminal justice system has been disproportionately abused to negatively impact People of Color and empowering citizenry in states to target anyone who has received or is suspected of receiving or providing abortion care increases the very real risks to those communities.



Access to Reproductive Healthcare at Public Institutes of Higher Education

Bill Number: TBD

One Sentence Synopsis: Requires public institutions of higher education to develop policies that guarantee students access to emergency contraception and medicated abortion.

Committees: House Appropriations and Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committees

Lead Sponsors: Delegate Ariana Kelly and Senator Brian Feldman

Lead Group: Maryland NOW

Lead Group Contact: Jakeya Johnson- Legislative Task Force Chair

Describe the problem:

Many college campuses have little to no access to essential reproductive healthcare resources. In cases of sexual assault, unprotected or coerced sex, and failed birth control, on campus access to emergency contraception and medicated abortion is an important way for students to maintain bodily autonomy and prevent unwanted pregnancy in a timely and private manner. Access off campus presents barriers such as limited health center pharmacy hours, transportation challenges, high pharmacy costs, pharmacies not stocking EC on the shelf, enforcing outdated age restrictions, or refusing to sell EC outright.

Describe your proposed legislation:

Public 4-year colleges and universities will be required to provide 24-hour access to over-the-counter contraception on campus through student health centers, retail outlets on campus, and/or vending machines, provide **or** refer for a full range of reproductive health services, and prepare and submit an annual reproductive health access plan, in consultation with students, to the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

Benefit to Communities of Color:

Yes. Statistically women of color have lesser access to healthcare resources and are more likely to not finish college due to unplanned pregnancy. Providing reproductive healthcare resources to these women is an incredibly important step in addressing the multifaceted injustices in both poverty and healthcare.



Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act (CCEJ)

Bill Number: TBD

One Sentence Synopsis: The Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act (CCEJ) will help meet Maryland’s greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction plan to meet net-zero emissions by 2045, in a just and equitable way by enhancing resilience to climate impacts; demanding accountability from fossil fuel companies by charging them a fee for the damages they are causing; using the revenue from the fee to help protect low- and moderate-income (LMI) households and energy-intensive trade-exposed businesses (EITE) from financial harm; and aiding county and municipal governments in developing local Climate Action Plans.

Committees: Economic Matters and Education, Energy and Environmental Affairs

Lead Sponsors: Delegate Lily Qi and Senator Karen Lewis Young

Lead Group: Rebuild Maryland Coalition (Climate XChange Maryland)

Lead Group Contact: Wandra Ashley-Williams, Regional Director, Climate XChange Maryland

Describe the problem: Climate change is one of the greatest global challenges of the twenty-first century. Although climate change is a collective problem, based on the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), people who are already most vulnerable and marginalized experience the greatest impacts. Climate change also reflects racial disparities and the widening gulf between rich and poor. Low- and moderate-income (LMI) communities are hit the worst by the climate crisis, many of which are headed by women. A large percentage of such households are families of color and rural family households.

Women's vulnerability to climate change stems from several factors - social, economic, and cultural. Although climate change is a collective problem, women are increasingly observed as more vulnerable than men to the effects of climate change and its burdens.

HEALTH DISPARITIES in WOMEN and CHILDREN: As we strive to move towards a pollution free environment, we must consider how to reduce the negative health effects of harmful air pollutants and to make this move a just transition. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists 2019 position paper states that “climate change is an urgent women’s health concern as well as a major public health challenge.” Continuous exposure to fossil fuels often leads to detrimental health effects for women, such as infant mortality, chronic bronchitis, and worsening of cardiac disease. Poor air quality can trigger asthma attacks, and elevated blood lead levels in children can cause developmental

disabilities. These adverse health effects are most consequential to at-risk populations, which include a high number of pregnant women and developing fetuses.

Describe your proposed legislation: The CCEJ incentivizes the reduction of fossil fuel CO2 emissions. It will generate billions of dollars for investment in clean energy infrastructure, all while providing protective benefits to Maryland's vulnerable populations and trade-exposed small businesses.

The CCEJ establishes two types of fossil fuel fees that include a polluter pays, no-pass through provision:

- Non-transportation fuel fee (Building Heat) starting at \$15/ton; increases \$5/ton per year; and is capped at \$60/ton until the target is met.
- Transportation fuel fee (Gas) starting at \$10/ton, increases \$3/ton per year, and is capped at \$37/ton until the target is met.

Two separate funds will be established with the revenue from the fossil fuel fee:

- **Benefits Fund** – 50% will be directed to LMI households and EITE businesses to protect them from financial harm.
 - 80% of the Benefit Fund directed to LMI households.
 - 20% of the Benefit Fund directed to EITE businesses.
- **Infrastructure Fund** – 50% of the revenue will be invested in initiatives that improve the health and welfare of the citizens of Maryland.
 - At least 50% of the Infrastructure Fund invested in projects that are directedly located within and provide meaningful benefits to underserved and underrepresented communities.
 - Up to 50% of the Infrastructure Fund distributed to county and municipal governments to develop qualified local climate plans and investments.
 - Up to 50% of the Infrastructure Fund disbursed to qualified county and municipal governments for projects to mitigate GHGs and build resilience throughout the State.

How Will Women Benefit from This Legislation?

Reducing greenhouse gas emission will greatly reduce the negative health effects of women and children while reducing the negative impacts on the public health, economic well-being, and natural treasures of the State. The two funds established with the revenue from the fossil fuel fee will be directed to underserved and underrepresented households and communities including women as indicated in the [Maryland Commission for Women 2021 Maryland Women – A Status Report](#).

To further protect impacted households, fees charged may not be passed through as a direct cost to an end user of a fossil fuel or a customer of a gas company. The CCEJ Act has been designed to DO NO HARM.

The CCEJ Act specifically states that every investment in communities must help to eliminate racial injustice. The bill will create the Climate Crisis Infrastructure Fund to invest in projects that are directly located within and provide meaningful benefits to underserved and underrepresented populations and invest in initiatives that improve the health and welfare of the citizens of the State by creating a cleaner, more just, and more efficient transportation sector throughout the State; sequestering carbon in forests, soils, and wetlands; promoting a just transition to clean energy; as well as providing funding for resilience against climate change and weather events that have a devastating impact on the lives of the citizens of the State and its economy.



Criminal Law - Sexual Crimes - Repeal of Spousal Defense

Bill Number: [HB4/SB129](#)

One Sentence Synopsis: This bill proposes to repeal the law allowing marriage as a defense to sex crimes.

Committees: Senate Judicial Proceedings, House Judiciary

Lead Sponsors: Senator Susan Lee, Delegate Charlotte Crutchfield

Lead Group: Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault

Lead Group Contact: Lisae C Jordan, Executive Director & Counsel

Describe the problem:

This is a bill to repeal the current statute that makes marriage a defense to some sex crimes. Sexual Assault disproportionately affects women.

Like many states, Maryland's laws were based on the premise that marriage was consent to sex and that, therefore, a man could not rape his wife. Unlike many states, Maryland has not yet firmly rejected that antiquated and fundamentally disrespectful concept.

Describe your proposed legislation:

Criminal Law §3-318 provides that marriage is a defense to certain sex crimes. We have made some progress: Spouses can be prosecuted for any sex crime if they have a limited divorce or for some sex crimes if they have been separated for three months or have a written separation agreement. Finally, if the rape involved actual force or threat of force, marriage is not a defense. For other sex crimes, marriage is a complete defense. This bill repeals Criminal Law §3-318. Marriage should never be a defense to a sex crime.

Benefit to Communities of Color:

Black and Indigenous women who are victims of sex crimes receive less police protection, less interventions, fewer prosecutions of their assaulter, and less assistance. The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that for every white woman that reports her rape, at least five white women do not report theirs; and yet, for every African-American woman that reports her rape, at least fifteen African-American women do not report theirs. (Reporting Crime to the Police, 1992-2000, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, March 2003). African American females experience intimate partner violence at a rate 35% higher than that of white females, and about 2.5 times the rate of women of other races, (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2001). 48% of Latinas in one study reported that their partner's violence against them had increased since they immigrated to the US. (Dutton, Mary; Leslye Orloff, and Giselle Aguilar Hass. 2000, Characteristics of help-seeking behaviors, resources, and services needs of battered immigrant Latinas: Legal and Policy implications. Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy. 7(2)). This bill will help reform a criminal justice system that fails women of color.



Maryland State Police Gun Center – Firearms Surrendered Under Final Protective Orders

Bill Number: [HB3/SB185](#)

One Sentence Synopsis: This bill will expand the role of the Maryland State Police Gun Center to include collecting and tracking data on guns surrendered pursuant to a final protective order.

Committees: Senate Judicial Proceedings, House Judiciary

Lead Sponsors: Senator Pam Beidle, Delegate Sandy Bartlett

Lead Group: House of Ruth Maryland

Lead Group Contact: Dorothy Lennig, Legal Clinic Director

Describe the problem:

One of the most important safety tools victims of domestic violence use is the protective order. Every final protective order requires the respondent to surrender their firearms to law enforcement. Domestic violence advocates have long been concerned that respondents are not surrendering all of their firearms. There have been several high profile cases where respondents have either not surrendered their firearms or only surrendered some of their firearms and subsequently shot and killed their victims. Currently, different law enforcement agencies have different protocols for tracking the surrender of firearms. Last year, the Maryland General Assembly passed SB 861 which created the Maryland State Police Gun Center. The Center is “a statewide firearms enforcement center for the tracking, screening, and vetting of all firearm crimes committed in the state.” This bill would expand the role of the Center to require each law enforcement agency to report to the Center information about firearms surrendered pursuant to a final protective order. It would be the first step in analyzing whether our current system of protective order gun surrendering is effective.

Describe your proposed legislation:

If enacted, this bill will give us data about whether Maryland is effectively getting firearms out of the hands of respondents in final protective orders.

Benefit to Communities of Color:

Many people of color are reluctant to call the police, even in domestic violence cases, because of their past experiences with law enforcement. For some people of color who are domestic violence survivors, the civil protective order is a good alternative because it is a civil, not criminal, remedy. This means the survivor can apply for a protective order without involving law enforcement. Passage of this bill would make the civil protective order an even stronger remedy.



Early Childhood Development – Child Care Scholarship Program – Funding

Number: TBD

One Sentence Synopsis: Codify recent gains in the State’s Child Care Scholarship Program (CCSP) guaranteeing access to all families eligible for CCS.

Committees: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment and Budget and Taxation Committees, and House Appropriations and Ways and Means Committees

Lead Sponsors: Senator Nancy King, Delegate Jared Solomon

Lead Group: Maryland Family Network

Lead Group Contact: Beth Morrow, Associate Director of Public Policy

Describe the problem:

The State’s Child Care Scholarship Program helps parents enter and remain in the workforce by subsidizing the high cost of child care. It gives parents access to licensed early education programs. In short, CCSP keeps parents earning and children learning.

During their working lives, nearly 85% of women will become mothers. Because new babies generally increase families’ expenses, family economic security suffers when families struggle to find and afford quality child care. Without care, women often struggle to re-enter the job market.

While Maryland has recently instituted dramatic improvements in its Child Care Scholarship Program, much work remains. Some changes will begin to minimize the burden women face when accessing support. Advocates anticipate policy changes such as presumptive eligibility for child care scholarship applicants and a streamlining of the scholarship application itself will begin to eliminate barriers to access.

Without sustained funding, however, families could face increased costs or waiting lists for care.

Describe your proposed legislation:

This legislation was introduced in response to the growing (and overdue) recognition of two facts laid bare by the pandemic: Child care, in U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen’s words, is “a textbook example of a broken market.” Child care is, moreover, an essential public good that not only needs but deserves substantial public investment.

The Child Care Scholarship Program is the largest public investment in the child care sector. In 2022, due to an influx of federal pandemic relief funds combined with an unexpectedly robust state economic rebound, Maryland’s early childhood programs—CCSP among them, benefited from tremendous investments authorized by the Governor and the General Assembly.

On May 23, 2022, MSDE enacted three programmatic changes in the CCSP: 1. Income eligibility was increased from 65% of state median income to 75% of state median income; 2. Scholarship reimbursement rates increased from the 60th percentile to the 70th percentile; and 3. parent co-pays were eliminated or significantly reduced.

According to estimates by The Regional Economic Studies Institute (RESI) at Towson University, for these programmatic changes to continue after the one-time federal funding sources are fully expended, the State will need to allocate additional funds for the CCSP. The cost estimates for FY 24 and FY 25 for these programmatic changes are \$67.2 million each year if the changes are expected to continue. If the State does not make an additional investment in FY 24 going forward, certain programmatic choices would be considered including reduced income eligibility, reduced reimbursement rates, and/or reinstate parent copays.

This bill seeks to sustain the critical investments in the Child Care Scholarship Program.

Benefit to Communities of Color:

An equitable early start is essential because early disparities decrease the likelihood that children and families receive the opportunities and services they need to reach their full potential. Equitable early life experiences are formative inputs to an adult's educational attainment, health status, and social contributions. When we start from the beginning, the benefits of equity are maximized—for individuals and for society as a whole. Ongoing efforts are needed to embed equity in the design of early childhood education policies, programs, and practices. Maryland's current system of early care and education is not equal to the task of reliably promoting learning, healthy development, and school readiness for all children.



Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Youth

Bill Number: TBD

One Sentence Synopsis: This bill will provide a safe harbor for child victims of sex trafficking and prevent their further victimization by connecting them to rehabilitative and supportive services through the already established Regional Navigator program, while providing a pathway to prevent any criminal or delinquent charges brought against them that are directly related to their trafficking.

Committees: Senate Judicial Proceedings, House Judiciary

Lead Sponsors: Senator Susan Lee

Lead Group: Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force

Lead Group Contact: Amanda Rodriguez, co-chair, Legislative Subcommittee, MD HTTF; Melanie Shapiro, co-chair, Legislative Subcommittee, MD HTTF

Describe the problem:

The majority of sex trafficking victims are women and girls. Currently in Maryland, children can be charged in the adult criminal or juvenile justice system for acts that are directly linked to their victimization, including prostitution and other related offenses.

Describe your proposed legislation:

This bill would provide a safe harbor for child victims of sex trafficking and prevent prosecution for acts committed as a result of their trafficking including prostitution and other related offenses. Legislation was passed in 2019 establishing the Regional Navigator program that connects child survivors of trafficking to necessary services. This bill will benefit women and girls by preventing them from being criminalized for acts they committed as a result of their trafficking victimization, and will support their healing rather than their continued punishment.

Benefit to Communities of Color:

Yes. Children of color are over-represented as child victims of sex trafficking. Communities of color as a whole are over-criminalized leading to children of color being disproportionately represented within the adult criminal and juvenile legal systems. This bill would provide a pathway out of these systems and would instead divert trafficked youth into services that support their healing rather than compound the trauma they've already experienced.



2023 Agenda Process and Bill Selection

The criteria for initiatives to be presented at the conference are:

- Addresses an issue related to women’s health, women’s personal safety at home, in public, in school, and in the workplace; the ability to achieve and maintain economic independence; or freedom from discrimination in Maryland’s economic, educational, judicial, political, and social system;
- Can be addressed through the legislation in the Maryland General Assembly;
- Has a reasonable chance to move successfully through the legislative process;
- Has an identifiable, sustainable lead group that can shepherd the bill.
 - The lead group must:
 - Be a Maryland-based group or a national group with a strong on-the-ground presence in Maryland;
 - Have issue-area expertise and/or a track record of supporting legislation/ advocacy in areas related to this proposal;
 - Have an identified representative who will be in regular contact with the MLAW Board of Directors about the progress of the legislation; and
 - Regularly provide legislative updates and supportive materials for MLAW to share with our members so that they can take action.

In 2020, we added a requirement that all legislative proposals submitted for consideration for the annual MLAW Legislative Agenda must include information about racial impact and be reviewed by the Board of Directors using a racial equity lens.

Following the conference, the bills presented will be sent to MLAW members for a vote. All individual and organizational members in good standing will be eligible to vote for their top priorities using rank choice voting. The top 6-8 bills will be selected as the **2023 Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women**.

The 2023 Agenda will be announced the week of December 19th and will officially presented at our **Annual Legislative Briefing**. The Briefing will be hosted on Zoom again this year, date TBD.

Demonstrate Your Womanpower with MLAW

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO TAKE ACTION ON LEGISLATION

MLAW (Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women) is a statewide group of organizations and individuals working to provide an independent, non-partisan voice advocating for critical legislation and policies affecting women and their families. Visit our website at www.mdlegagendaforwomen.org for more information.

Here are a few steps you can take to stay informed about legislation you care about and to let your legislators know your position.



SIGN UP FOR MLAW'S YAHOO LIST SERVE to receive information, updates, alerts, and other information of interest.



LEARN MORE about the issues you care about.



CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS during the session:

- ★ Call, write, e-mail, fax or visit legislators to express your support or opposition to legislation. You can find who your state legislators are, their contact information, copies of bills, hearing schedules and more at <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebiste>
- ★ Contact the lead group or groups to find out more about what you can do to support or oppose legislative proposals or other issues.
- ★ Attend a legislative hearing and be a visible supporter.
- ★ Submit written or give oral testimony.
- ★ Find out how your legislators voted – and hold them accountable – by letters or by your next opportunity to vote for them.



SPREAD THE WORD – promote the MLAW Agenda and other issues to friends and colleagues and encourage them to take action.



MAINTAIN FOCUS on key areas: health care, reproductive rights, economics, family law, domestic and sexual violence.



JOIN MLAW to support an independent voice for women's and family issues.



PARTICIPATE – and build women's collective power.

Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women

305 W. Chesapeake Avenue, Suite 201 • Towson, MD 21204

Phone/Fax: 443-519-1005 • mdlegagenda4women@yahoo.com • www.mdlegagendaforwomen.org



Celebrating 28 Years of Advocacy: 1994-2022

2022-2023 Membership Form

MLAW's membership year is July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023

I Want to Make a Difference!

I Want to be an MLAW Member

Type of Membership (*check only one*):

- \$40 - Individual**
- \$75 - Organization revenue under \$25,000**
- \$125 - Organization revenue over \$25,000**

If you are joining as both an individual and an organization, please complete a separate form for EACH membership.

I Want to Do More by Making an Additional Donation

- \$500** **\$250** **\$100** **\$50** **Other** _____

Payment:

- A check for \$_____ , made payable to MLAW, is enclosed.**
- I want to pay through PayPal. Go to the MLAW website at:
<http://www.mdlegagendaforwomen.org>**

Individual or Organization: _____

Please spell out organization name. No acronyms.

Contact Name (*for organizations only*) _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ **Email:** _____

IMPORTANT! *Please include an email address. Most of the business of MLAW will be conducted via email.*

Mail this completed form to:
MLAW
305 W. Chesapeake Avenue, Suite 201
Towson, MD 21204

The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Maryland Women (MLAW) is a 501(c)4 organization. Because we engage in legislative advocacy, contributions to MLAW are not tax-deductible.