

MEMORANDUM

May 24, 2011

TO: County Council

FROM: Robert H. Drummer, Senior Legislative Attorney 

SUBJECT: **Action:** Bill 4-11, Commission for Women - Reorganization

Government Operations and Fiscal Policy/Health and Human Services Committee recommendation: disapprove the Bill.

Bill 4-11, Commission for Women - Reorganization, sponsored by the Council President on recommendation of the Organizational Reform Commission, was introduced on March 8, 2011. A public hearing was held on March 29 and joint Government Operations and Fiscal Policy/Health and Human Services Committee worksessions were held on April 27 and May 5.

Bill 4-11 would eliminate the Office of the Commission for Women, reallocate certain functions of the Office, and provide staff support for the Commission for Women.

Background

In its report to the Council dated January 31, 2011, the Organizational Reform Commission (ORC), in **Recommendation #3**, recommended the County reorganize the Commission for Women and eliminate the Office of the Commission for Women.

The full text of the recommendation is below.

1) **Proposed Consolidations and Reorganizations.** The ORC proposes the following consolidations and reorganizations for boards, committees and commissions:

a) **Commission for Women (CFW)** – Current Budget- **\$881,300** – The ORC commends the CFW, which over the years has served a very important function. But as County government and the social landscape have evolved, it is clear that many of the CFW's activities duplicate those provided by other agencies. We believe that the CFW's core functions can be served in other ways. The CFW's counseling and career center is now duplicated to a great extent by the new Family Justice Center, the County's Workforce Development program, Montgomery College, and private entities and religious organizations.

Additionally, the County's Office of Intergovernmental Relations effectively advocates for the County at all levels of government including CFW issues.

- *The ORC recommends that the Commission for Women be restructured as an advisory committee attached to another department or unit deemed most appropriate by the Council and Executive. This action could save the County more than \$800,000 annually.*

Executive's Response

In a memorandum to the Council President dated February 21, 2011, the Executive responded to each of the 28 recommendations in the ORC report (©6). The Executive supported this recommendation with conditions as follows:

3. Reorganize the Commission for Women and eliminate the office.

County Executive's Position: Support with Conditions

I support the ORC recommendation regarding the reorganization of the Commission for Women. My FY12 Recommended Operating Budget will address the reorganization of this Commission, but in order to maintain the excellent work of the Commission for Women I will recommend a reduction, but not the elimination of all staff support. This recommendation requires implementing legislation which I will forward to the Council.

However, the Executive subsequently decided that his proposed modified reorganization of the CFW did not require County legislation, and he did not submit proposed legislation to implement this ORC recommendation.

Bill 4-11, sponsored by the Council President on recommendation of the ORC would implement ORC Recommendation #3.

Public Hearing

All 10 speakers at the Council's March 29 public hearing opposed the Bill, including the President of the Commission for Women, Jaclyn Lichter Vincent. See ©11-12. Representatives from the AARP-Maryland (©13-15), Maryland NOW (©16-18), Montgomery County Chapter – Older Women's League (©19-23), Montgomery County Women's Bar Association (©24-25), and the Montgomery County Divorce Roundtable (©26-28) each opposed the Bill. Family law attorneys Sharon Grosfeld (©29-30), Carren Oler (©31-35), and Anne Lopiano (©36) all opposed the Bill. Finally, a volunteer for the CFW Counseling and Career Center, Colleen Kelly, testified in opposition to the Bill. See ©37-39.

The overwhelming support for the CFW Office and opposition to the Bill was based upon the direct services performed by the CFW Counseling and Career Center.

Worksessions

The joint Government Operations and Fiscal Policy and Health and Human Services Committee reviewed this Bill at worksessions on April 27 and May 5. The joint Committee recommended (5-0) approving the Executive's proposal to keep the Office with reduced staffing as part of the single budgetary unit called the Community Engagement Cluster. The joint Committee also placed additional funding on the reconciliation list for one licensed therapist to supervise the volunteer counselors.

Issues

1. What is the fiscal and economic impact of the Bill?

OMB estimated annual net savings from the Bill of \$586,360. This estimate is based upon eliminating the personnel and operating expenses for the Office of \$869,610 and providing staff support from the CAO at the cost of \$282,980. OMB assumed that the CAO would have to hire a Manager I and an Administrative Specialist I to provide staff support for the Commission. This would be the same staff complement that the Executive recommended in the FY12 Budget if the Office of the CFW is retained and the Counseling Center is eliminated. A Manager I is the highest grade in the County merit system. **The joint Committee recommended placing \$190,860 on the reconciliation list to pay for one full-time licensed therapist and a principal administrative aide to continue counseling with volunteer counselors.**

2. What services are performed by the Office?

The Commission for Women (CFW) is an advisory board comprised of 15 volunteers from the community and a County department. The CFW was created more than 30 years ago to provide unique services to displaced homemakers and other women seeking to enter the workforce. Over the years some of these services have been duplicated by other public and private entities. The CFW's counseling and career consultation programs are now duplicated to a great extent by the new Family Justice Center, the County's Workforce Development program, Montgomery College, and private entities and religious organizations. The Commission also works as an advocacy group for women's issues, with some assistance from the County's Office of Intergovernmental Relations, at all levels of government.

The Office of the Commission for Women provides staff support for the Commission and oversees the counseling and other direct client services to women in the Women's Counseling and Career Center. CFW estimated that about 50% of their budget is spent providing direct services. Career guidance is provided both through individual "career counseling" and through some of the classes offered in the counseling center for help with job loss, entering or re-entering the workforce, balancing work and family, networking skills, dealing with difficult people in the workplace, resume writing, job hunt strategies, interview techniques, and internet job search. The Center also offers the Meyers-Briggs personality type test and interpretation, and other career aptitude tests. Pure career guidance is a relatively small part of the Center's services. Most clients come to the Center with other problems such as depression, separation and divorce, low self esteem, anger and trust issues, or other serious life crises that are either affecting or are being affected by the career issues, and must be handled at the same time.

In FY10, more than 900 clients participated in 3113 counseling sessions at the Center, and 2200 participated in classes and support groups. Of the 2291 clients returning the demographic information forms when participating in counseling or classes, 42% identified themselves as belonging to ethnic minorities, including 17% African-American, 14% Hispanic, 6% Asian Pacific, 1% American Indian, and 4% other ethnicity. Thirty-eight percent (38%) reported incomes under \$30,000; 15% between \$30,000 and \$50,000; 11% between \$50,000 and \$70,000; and 37% reported incomes above \$70,000. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of clients were not currently married and 27% reported that they had never been married, while 29% responded that they were separated or divorced, and 1% indicated they were widowed. At the time they received services at the Counseling and Career Center in FY10, 57% of clients reported they were not employed. Thirty-one percent (31%) were between the ages of 20 and 39; 57% are between the ages of 40 and 60, and a little over 10% are 60 or older (41% are 50 and older).

3. Are these services available in other places?

The Executive's list of other entities providing similar services is at ©40-42. Executive staff was not able to verify the capacity or the fees charged for the services of the many agencies on the list. The Organizational Reform Commission concluded that many of these counseling services were available from private non-profit providers and elsewhere in the County. For example, HHS provides similar mental health counseling through employees and vendors. The testimony at the hearing indicated that the CFW has been successful in providing much of this service through volunteer counselors. This could also be done through another agency, such as HHS.

4. Should the Bill be enacted?

The Executive proposed eliminating the counseling services provided by the Office and retaining the Director as part of a unified appropriation for the Office of Community Engagement. **The joint Committee recommended (5-0) approval of the Executive's proposal to keep the Office of the Commission with reduced staffing as part of the single budgetary unit with the Office of Community Partnerships, the Regional Service Centers, and the Gilchrist Center. Most of the savings from the Bill would still be realized due to the reduced funding. The joint Committee recommended (5-0) disapproval of the Bill.**

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Bill No. 4-11
Concerning: Commission for Women -
Reorganization
Revised: March 7, 2011
Draft No. 2
Introduced: March 8, 2011
Expires: September 8, 2012
Enacted: _____
Executive: _____
Effective: _____
Sunset Date: None
Ch. _____, Laws of Mont. Co. _____

COUNTY COUNCIL FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

By: Council President on the recommendation of the Organizational Reform Commission

AN ACT to:

- (1) eliminate the Office of the Commission for Women;
- (2) reallocate certain functions of the Office of the Commission for Women;
- (3) provide for staff support for the Commission for Women; and
- (4) generally amend the law concerning the Commission for Women.

By amending

Montgomery County Code
Chapter 1A, Structure of County Government
Section 1A-203, Establishing Other Offices

Chapter 2, Administration
Section 2-59, Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

Chapter 11, Consumer Protection
Section 11-6, Filing Complaints

Chapter 27, Human Rights and Civil Liberties
Sections 27-26B, 27-28, and 27-33A

Boldface	<i>Heading or defined term.</i>
<u>Underlining</u>	<i>Added to existing law by original bill.</i>
[Single boldface brackets]	<i>Deleted from existing law by original bill.</i>
<u>Double underlining</u>	<i>Added by amendment.</i>
[[Double boldface brackets]]	<i>Deleted from existing law or the bill by amendment.</i>
* * *	<i>Existing law unaffected by bill.</i>

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following Act:

1 **Sec. 1. Sections 1A-203, 2-59, 11-6, 27-26B, 27-28 and 27-33A are**
2 **amended as follows:**

3 **1A-203. Establishing other offices.**

4 (a) Executive Branch. These are the offices of the Executive Branch that
5 are not part of a department or principal office.

6 [Office of the Commission for Women [section 27-28 et seq.]]

7 * * *

8 **2-59. Domestic Violence Coordinating Council.**

9 * * *

10 (c) *Composition and terms of members.*

11 (1) The Coordinating Council has 17 members.

12 (2) The County Council requests the following individuals to serve
13 as ex officio members of the Coordinating Council:

14 (A) The Administrative Judge for District 6 of the Maryland
15 District Court or designee of the Administrative Judge;

16 (B) The Administrative Judge for the Montgomery County
17 Circuit Court or designee of the Administrative Judge;

18 (C) The State’s Attorney for Montgomery County or designee
19 [or] of the State’s Attorney;

20 (D) The Regional Director of the Division of Parole and
21 Probation, Maryland Department of Public Safety and
22 Corrections or designee of the Regional Director;

23 (E) The County Sheriff or designee of the County Sheriff; and

24 (F) The President of the County Board of Education or
25 designee of the President.

26 (3) Subject to confirmation by the County Council, the County
27 Executive should appoint the following individuals to serve as ex

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- officio members of the Coordinating Council:
- (A) A member or designee of the County Council, selected by the Council President;
- (B) The Chief of Police or designee of the Chief of Police;
- (C) The Director of the Department of Health and Human Services or designee of the Director.
- (D) [The Executive Director] a member or designee of the Commission for Women [or designee of the Executive Director]; and
- (E) The Director of the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation or designee of the Director.

* * *

11-6. Filing complaints.

* * *

(f) *Referral to the [Commission for Women] Departments of Economic Development and Health and Human Services. The Director may refer a domestic worker to the [Commission for Women Counseling and Career Center] Department of Economic Development and the Department of Health and Human Services for additional assistance if the Director determines that the services offered there would benefit the worker.*

27-26B. Interagency fair housing coordinating group.

* * *

- (b) The County Executive appoints the members of the coordinating group, subject to confirmation by the County Council. The coordinating group consists of one or more employees of each of the following agencies:
- (1) Office of Community Outreach in the Office of the Chief

- 55 Administrative Officer;
- 56 (2) Human Rights Commission;
- 57 (3) Housing Opportunities Commission;
- 58 (4) Department of Economic Development;
- 59 (5) Department of Housing and Community Affairs;
- 60 (6) Community service centers;
- 61 (7) Department of Health and Human Services; and
- 62 (8) [Commission for Women; and
- 63 (9)] Commission on People with Disabilities.

64 * * *

65 **27-28. Created; composition; appointment; terms of office and**
66 **compensation of members; meetings[, etc.]**

67 * * *

68 (e) Staff. The Chief Administrative Officer must designate appropriate staff
69 to support the Commission.

70 **27-33A. Fees.**

71 (a) The County Executive by executive order may impose user fees on
72 participants in [the programs, services, or activities] any program,
73 service, or activity conducted by the Commission for Women. [Fees]
74 Each fee must not exceed the reasonable cost of administering the
75 program, service, or activity.

76 (b) The [Director] Chief Administrative Officer may waive the user fee
77 charged to a participant if:

- 78 (1) The waiver would promote the purposes of this Article; and
- 79 (2) The participant cannot afford to pay the fee.

LEGISLATIVE REQUEST REPORT

Bill 4-11

Commission for Women - Reorganization

DESCRIPTION: Bill 4-11 would eliminate the Office of the Commission for Women, reallocate certain functions of the Office, and provide staff support for the Commission for Women.

PROBLEM: The Organizational Reform Commission recommended that the Commission for Women be reorganized and the Office eliminated.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: Although the CFW has served an important function over the years, many of its activities duplicate the activities of other County agencies and private organizations. The goal is to restructure this function to reduce County discretionary expenses to meet reduced County revenues.

COORDINATION: County Executive, Commission for Women

FISCAL IMPACT: To be requested.

ECONOMIC IMPACT: To be requested.

EVALUATION: To be requested.

EXPERIENCE ELSEWHERE: To be researched.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION: Organizational Reform Commission Report.
Robert H. Drummer, Senior Legislative Attorney

APPLICATION WITHIN MUNICIPALITIES: Not applicable.

PENALTIES: None.



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

MEMORANDUM

February 21, 2011

TO: Valerie Ervin, President, County Council

FROM: Isiah Leggett, County Executive 

SUBJECT: Organizational Reform Commission Recommendations

This memorandum provides the County Council with my recommendations regarding the final report of the Organizational Reform Commission (ORC) which was released on January 31, 2011. I am deeply grateful to all of the ORC members, who were very generous in volunteering their time and expertise and spent hundreds of hours in developing the report. As the attached materials indicate, I am supportive of most of the ORC recommendations and urge the Council to approve the recommendations as outlined in my attached response.

The Commission has acknowledged that implementing its recommendations will be difficult, time consuming and complex. However, this is not a sufficient justification for failing to undertake the implementation effort. In addition, the controversy and opposition that some of these recommendations have engendered are also not alone a basis for rejecting the recommendations. Challenging the status quo will always provoke opposition from entrenched interests and those not willing to undertake necessary changes. At a time when we have requested that our residents shoulder increases in taxes (i.e. the energy, telephone and property taxes) and we have reduced several important public safety and safety net services, and reduced funding for education, we owe it to the taxpayers of this County to undertake the arduous task of further restructuring our government in order to achieve every possible efficiency and savings. Furthermore, my Fiscal Year 2012 Recommended Operating Budget is very likely to include additional reductions to many vital programs and services. To ignore possible long-term savings at this critical time would be a disservice to our taxpayers.

I realize that a majority of the County Council has already indicated that at this time they do not support State legislation that would enable the Council to merge Park Police and County Police if it later chose to do so. This legislation is a necessary first step in implementing one of the most prominent recommendations of the ORC -- i.e.,

Valerie Ervin, President, County Council
Page 2
February 21, 2011

a merger of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) Park Police with the County Police Department.¹ The Council's recent action was not taken in the context of the broader ORC report, this recommendation and the upcoming March 15th budget recommendations. Unfortunately, the Council will have to make extremely difficult decisions in the FY12 budget deliberations, including reductions to services and programs, cuts in staffing levels, and possibly significant changes to pay and benefits for County employees. As I stated at the time that the Council discussed the proposed State legislation, I do not believe it was prudent for the Council to reject that potential merger, and the savings and efficiencies that would arise from that merger, before it fully evaluates all of the implications of that decision in the context of all of the issues that relate to the FY12 operating budget.

I respectfully urge you to comprehensively evaluate the ORC recommendations along with my recommendations and the implications for the FY 12 budget and beyond. My staff and I stand ready to work with you to ensure that the efficiency and effectiveness of County Government is maximized.

Attachments

copies:

Organizational Reform Commission Members
Stephen B. Farber, County Council Staff Director
Christopher S. Barclay, President, Board of Education
Dr. Jerry D. Weast, Superintendent, Montgomery County Public School
Jerry Robinson, Acting Executive Director, Housing Opportunities Commission
Francoise Carrier, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board
DeRionne P. Pollard, Ph.D., President, Montgomery College
Jerry N. Johnson, General Manager/CEO, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission
Executive Branch Department and Office Directors
Fariba Kassiri, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
Jennifer Hughes, Special Assistant to the County Executive

¹ MC/PG 112-11 - Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission-County Police Authority, Metropolitan District Tax, and Transfer of Property



OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Joseph F. Beach
Director

MEMORANDUM

March 29, 2011

TO: Valerie Ervin, President, County Council

FROM: Joseph F. Beach, Director

SUBJECT: Bill 04-11, Commission for Women - Reorganization
Bill 05-11, Office of Human Rights - Human Rights Commission - Reorganization

The purpose of this memorandum is to transmit a fiscal and economic impact statement to the Council on the subject legislation.

LEGISLATION SUMMARY

Bill 04-11 would eliminate the Office of the Commission for Women, reallocate certain functions of the Office and provide staff support for the Commission for Women, and generally amend the law concerning the Commission for Women.

Bill 05-11 changes the authority of the Human Rights Commission to adjudicate only those cases that allege a violation of the County's Human Rights law that are unique to Montgomery County. The Office of Human Rights will investigate and attempt to conciliate those cases that assert an act of discrimination that is unique to Montgomery County under the County's Human Rights law. Since the number of cases that will be handled by the Office of Human Rights will be greatly reduced, the size of the office may be reduced, which should provide the County with a reduction in expenditures. For complaints that allege a discriminatory act that is also prohibited under state or federal law, the Commission must handle the complaint by advising the complainant of the right to file a legal action in state court under the state human rights law or to file a complaint with the applicable state or federal enforcement agency. A complainant will retain the right to enforce all aspects of the County's Human Rights law, including provisions that prohibit acts of discrimination that are not unique to the County, through the state court system

FISCAL SUMMARY

The fiscal impact of the subject legislation is shown below for both the Office of the Commission for Women and the Office of Human Rights.

Bill 4-11 would eliminate the Office of the Commission for Women, but would require that the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) designate appropriate staff to support the Commission. The chart below shows the savings from the elimination of the Office, but shows the resources that may be required to continue to support the Commission. Continued support for the Commission could be at

Office of the Director

varying levels based on the needs of the Commission, the judgment of the CAO as to the level of support that was appropriate, and available resources. The analysis below assumes that ongoing support would be provided through a Manager I position and an Administrative Specialist I (grade 18).

	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	Total
Eliminate Office of Commission for Women							
Personnel Costs	(\$787,730)						
Operating Expense	(\$81,880)						
	(\$869,610)	(\$869,610)	(\$869,610)	(\$869,610)	(\$869,610)	(\$869,610)	(\$5,217,660)
Retain Support for the Commission (as required under proposed MCC 27-28(e))							
Manager I (1.0 WY)	\$203,840	\$203,840	\$203,840	\$203,840	\$203,840	\$203,840	\$1,223,040
Administrative Specialist (1.0 WY)	\$68,890	\$68,890	\$68,890	\$68,890	\$68,890	\$68,890	\$413,340
Operating Expenses	\$10,250	\$10,250	\$10,250	\$10,250	\$10,250	\$10,250	\$61,500
Total	\$282,980	\$282,980	\$282,980	\$282,980	\$282,980	\$282,980	\$1,697,880
Net Fiscal Impact	(\$586,630)	(\$586,630)	(\$586,630)	(\$586,630)	(\$586,630)	(\$586,630)	(\$3,519,780)

Bill 5-11 would not eliminate the Office of Human Rights, but would reduce the caseload for the Office by requiring the Office to investigate, conciliate, and adjudicate before the Commission a case alleging only discriminatory acts that do not violate State or Federal law. The fiscal impact shown below replicates the recommendation in the County Executive's Recommended Budget in that all positions in the Office of Human Rights are eliminated with the exception of the Director, a Manager III, and four investigators. Of the four investigators retained, two will serve for 12 months and continue with the Office for FY13-17 and two will serve for six months. The Manager III will serve for four months and will be abolished on 11/1/11.

	FY12	FY13**	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	Total
Office of Human Rights*	(\$1,271,480)	(\$1,406,360)	(\$1,406,360)	(\$1,406,360)	(\$1,406,360)	(\$1,406,360)	(\$8,303,280)
Personnel Costs	(\$1,143,250)						
Operating Expense	(\$128,230)						
* Reduction in personnel and related resources if focus of Office was shifted to only investigate, conciliate, and adjudicate before the Commission a case alleging only discriminatory acts that do not violate State or Federal law.							
** Savings increase in FY13-17 because two investigator positions and a Manager III position are retained for part of FY12, but abolished during the fiscal year. The additional savings are reflected in FY13-17.							

The subject legislation would support the County Executive's proposal to consolidate the Office of the Commission for Women and the Office of Human Rights with the five Regional Services Center, the Office of Community Partnerships (currently in the Offices of the County Executive), and the Recreation Department's Gilchrist Center and create the Office of Community Engagement. This multi-department reorganization will streamline operations of the affected departments and provide greater coordination in the County's efforts to reach out and engage the local community in solving public problems. As the chart below indicates, this reorganization will result in ongoing savings estimated at \$2.8 million annually and cumulative savings of nearly \$17.5 million over six years.

	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	Total
Regional Services Center	(\$815,390)	(\$815,390)	(\$815,390)	(\$815,390)	(\$815,390)	(\$815,390)	(\$4,892,340)
Personnel Costs	(\$696,060)						
Operating Expense	(\$119,330)						
Office of Human Rights*	(\$1,271,480)	(\$1,406,360)	(\$1,406,360)	(\$1,406,360)	(\$1,406,360)	(\$1,406,360)	(\$8,303,280)
Personnel Costs	(\$1,143,250)						
Operating Expense	(\$128,230)						
Office of Commission for Women	(\$586,630)	(\$586,630)	(\$586,630)	(\$586,630)	(\$586,630)	(\$586,630)	(\$3,519,780)
Personnel Costs	(\$63,650)						
Operating Expense	(\$522,980)						
Office of Community Partnership	(\$119,070)	(\$119,070)	(\$119,070)	(\$119,070)	(\$119,070)	(\$119,070)	(\$714,420)
Personnel Costs	(\$84,070)						
Operating Expense	(\$35,000)						
Grand Total	(\$2,792,570)	(\$2,927,450)	(\$2,927,450)	(\$2,927,450)	(\$2,927,450)	(\$2,927,450)	(\$17,429,820)
Personnel Costs	(\$1,987,030)						
Operating Expense	(\$805,540)						

Note: Projections assume no growth in salaries or benefit costs FY13-17 and that abolished positions are not reinstated
 * Savings increase in FY13-17 because investigator positions and a Manager III position are retained for part of FY12, but abolished during the fiscal year. The additional savings are reflected in FY13-17.

The following contributed to and concurred with this analysis: Beryl Feinberg and Philip Weeda of the Office of Management and Budget and Fariba Kassiri of the Offices of the County Executive.

JFB:pw

- c: Kathleen Boucher, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
- Fariba Kassiri, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
- Lisa Austin, Offices of the County Executive
- Beryl Feinberg, Office of Management and Budget
- Brady Goldsmith, Office of Management and Budget
- John Cuff, Office of Management and Budget
- Philip Weeda, Office of Management and Budget

Testimony of Jaclyn Lichter Vincent
President, Montgomery County Commission for Women
In OPPOSITION to Council Bill 4-11
March 29, 2011

Good Evening Council President Ervin, Vice President Berliner and members of the Council. My name is Jaclyn Lichter Vincent and I am the President of the Montgomery County Commission for Women. Before I begin, with your permission, I'd like to ask my fellow commissioners, volunteers and supporters of the Commission who are also here in opposition to this bill to please stand. Thank you.

On behalf of the Commission for Women, I am here to oppose Council Bill 4-11, which would eliminate the office of the Commission for Women and its Counseling and Career Center. If passed, this legislation would have a devastating impact on women and families in Montgomery County who depend on the direct services and advocacy provided by the Commission and Counseling Center. It would also change the very nature of the Commission's advocacy on behalf of Montgomery County's women and families.

As you are aware, the Commission for Women was established by statute in 1972 as a 15-member board advisory to "the residents of the county, the county council, the county executive and the various departments of county, state and federal governments on matters relating to discrimination or prejudice on account of sex, and to recommend such procedures, program or legislation as it may deem necessary and proper to promote and insure equal rights and opportunities for all persons, regardless of their sex." The law further provides that the Commission for Women is "an office of the executive branch of government...under the supervision of an Executive Director..." which is a merit system position. The current language in the statute is model legislation for Commissions for Women across the country.

The proposal under consideration would eliminate the Commission for Women as a separate and distinct office within the Executive Branch and by default, remove the provision for a merit-system Executive Director. The ORC recommendation, which was the impetus for this legislation, proposes to change the commission to a committee "attached to some department or unit" of county government.

Let's be clear - this is not a budget-savings proposal. This is an attempt to significantly diminish the effectiveness of the Commission. The County Executive's budget proposal achieves the same savings without eliminating the office and maintains the Commission as it was legislatively created and intended. If the Commission were to be placed within another agency, with whatever staff it is assigned reporting to a politically appointed department head, the commission would not be able to provide independent advice as it does now, directly to the Executive and the Council.

As is made clear in the original statute, the Commission is advisory, it has broad authority for advising – but we can't make any one listen. There is no reason to restrict the issues that the Commission can consider or to whom it can deliver its advice.

I understand the economic challenges facing the County. However, the Commission for Women has not slid through these difficult times unscathed. In fact, in the FY 2011 budget, the Commission had the second highest reduction, at 27%, of any department in County Government. The other offices and departments in the top 5 are much larger departments with greater budgets (Human Resources, Transportation). A 27% cut last year meant a reduction from seven (7) full-time employees to four (4). These workers are not just for the Commission itself but also staff the Counseling and Career Center. This 27% reduction was in addition to moving into a county-owned office last summer which provided significant savings to the County, although not reflected in the Commission's budget.

Despite these deep cuts and relocation, the Office of the Commission for Women has continued to provide much needed direct support services to women and families in Montgomery County and has maintained its effective advocacy at the local, state and federal levels.

March is Women's History Month. It is a shame that instead of celebrating the work of the Commission for Women and recommitting ourselves to equality for all in our community, we are here debating legislation that would so weaken the Commission as to make it unrecognizable to its founders.

You may indeed have to make significant budget cuts. But even within the Commission's own budget, you do not need to change the legislation that established this office, to achieve them.

We urge you to **OPPOSE** Council bill 4-11 and instead make a statement showing your strong support for the women and families of Montgomery County and an acknowledgement of the Commission's fine work in serving their unique needs.



AARP Maryland
200 St. Paul Place
Suite 2510
Baltimore, MD 21202

4
T 1-866-542-8163
F 410-837-0269
TTY 1-877-434-7598
www.aarp.org/md

Testimony before the Montgomery County Council
in Opposition of Bill 4-11, Commission for Women-Reorganization
Deniece L. Fields
Associate State Director Community Outreach, AARP Maryland

March 29, 2011

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Council:

Good evening, my name is Deniece Fields. I am the Associate State Director for Community Outreach at the AARP Maryland State Office. On behalf of AARP and our more than 800,000 members in Maryland; 144,000 of whom call Montgomery County home, thank you for this opportunity to speak in opposition of Bill 4-11 – Commission for Women –Reorganization. As you may know, for over 50 years, AARP has had one mission: helping to make life better for older Americans through advocacy, public education and service. AARP is a leading voice on issues important to county residents age 50+. AARP has partnered with the Montgomery County Commission for Women to educate and advocate for women and families in Montgomery County and throughout the state. This past January, AARP was a premier sponsor of the Commissions' annual Women's Legislative Briefing. The briefing had more than 600 attendees from counties throughout the state. At this time, no other county convenes a legislative briefing that provides the same depth and wealth of information. The Commission has an advocacy platform that only a few organizations can match. For example, at the Women's Legislative Briefing, the Commission used its power and strength to lead the effort to advocate for state laws to implement the Affordable Care Act in Maryland (Senate Bill 183 / House Bill 170), as well for the placement of a statue of

Maryland native, Harriet Tubman, in the National Statutory Hall Collection at the State Capitol (Senate Bill 351 and House Bill 455). AARP also was pleased to support last year's Women's Legislative Briefing, as well as the National Convention of the Association of Commissions for Women Conference in Rockville during 2010.

Moreover, the Commission oversees a counseling and career center that serves women and families in Montgomery County. The Center provides invaluable information, resources, and counseling on diverse range of employment and related financial security issues. Older Marylanders are concerned about county governments cutting or reducing services while raising taxes. Two out of five AARP members in Maryland are still employed outside the home. However, over the past 18 months, more than thirty percent (30%) of the AARP members who are employed have experienced a reduction in income or loss of a job. Older Marylanders are also concerned about affording the costs of their utilities and staying in their homes as they age, particularly since there are more Maryland residents age 50 and older than there are children in grades K-12 across the state. The Counseling and Career Center is an invaluable resource for County residents, including our members. During tough economic times, it is unconscionable to eliminate or reduce services that assist women and children with transitioning through difficult obstacles in their lives. As more older residents lose their jobs or have difficulty in securing employment, they will look to county services to help them make it through the day. We implore the County Council to be mindful that critical services and programs are needed to help many families survive and remain independent. We realize that the current fiscal landscape makes some cuts unavoidable. However, the Montgomery County Commission for Women serves countless residents uniquely each year and the Commission should be protected to ensure that women and families remain intact and strong.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these comments and to oppose Council Bill 4-11. AARP is committed to working with our elected leaders proactively and productively to improve life for older residents in Montgomery County and all Marylanders.

Thus cuts to programs such as the Commission for Women are short-sighted and contraindicated. But County budget staff do not have the research context to know this. It is the responsibility of the County Executive and the County Council to provide the necessary background and direction to ensure that the budget cuts are done with a scalpel instead of a meat cleaver.

The listing of current publications generated under the CFW is impressive, including your groundbreaking – and no-cost - study on *Mothers and Poverty* and the *Mothers and Poverty Policy Agenda*. The workers' guides and the publication on violence in relationships give women and girls an ability to accurately assess their circumstances and resources for improvement. Nowhere else in Montgomery County government will such essential studies be undertaken, especially with the necessary budget cuts impacting the other social services departments.

The Women's Legislative Briefing has become a statewide, important event, bringing together women from a broad range of backgrounds to learn about numerous political issues and to interface with local, state, and national elected officials. Tens of thousands of women and men have participated in the past decades, and this participation has enabled the political process in Maryland to better reflect the needs and desires of its citizens. Having served on its planning committee, I have personally observed how essential it is to have staff support for such endeavors.

I am particularly concerned that the ORC deemed "redundant" the life skills and job counseling delivered at little (\$20) or no cost, lumping these one-day sessions in with classes at Montgomery College, which currently provides no equivalent counseling, and costs hundreds of dollars for a class. The CFW counseling provides the short-term, beginning steps frequently necessary to get someone ready to explore the possibility of standing up for herself in the workplace or in a divorce context, of taking classes, or even stepping on a college campus. ***Cuts to these programs now will merely result in larger need for county support in future years.*** And, as a taxpayer, that concerns me.

A listing of the workshops and programs provided by the CFW includes sessions on job skills, which will ultimately pay off in less dependence on county resources and an increased tax base. Relationship counseling results in stronger families, fewer behavioral issues with the children, less demand for domestic violence services, etc. Divorce seminars result in increased communications, assertiveness re child support issues, a team approach to parenting, etc. All have immediate benefits to families and short- and long-term financial benefits to the county. By focusing on services for women, families benefit, and county costs can be lowered. Everyone benefits.

While you may be able to "outsource" some of the tasks currently done by the CFW and its staff, you will not have the virtually free resources provided by the dozens of professionals, which are currently providing the necessary focus on the needs of women and their families. It is a fallacy that one or two professionals can substitute for

the breadth and depth of knowledge and experience which the Commission for Women provides, accessible only because there is paid staff support to leverage this valuable resource. Montgomery County – women and men – needs the vision and focus provided by the Commission for Women and its staff, which is necessary to enable the County to maximize its assets and continue to provide for all the needs of all its residents.

The argument against the CFW sounds like the argument against the need for the Equal Rights Amendment: we have other organizations which help women, so why do we need the Commission for Women? The obvious answer is that we need all the organizations we can looking out for the needs of women. There are never enough. The right answer is more comprehensive: we need the CFW – with staff – because it is the most cost-effective use of Montgomery County resources.

I know that the County Council is going to have tough decisions in the days ahead. But I hope that you will reconsider the short- and long-term consequences to the County's Budget of the cuts to the Commission for Women.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY CHAPTER

**TESTIMONY OF THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY
CHAPTER OF OWL (MIDLIFE AND OLDER WOMEN)
ON BILL 4-11 BEFORE THE COUNTY COUNCIL**

MARCH 28, 2011

I AM SARAH GOTBAUM, M.S.W., SOCIAL WORKER, Ph.D. SOCIOLOGIST, FEMINIST, AND FOUNDER OF THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY CHAPTER OF OWL, THE VOICE OF MIDLIFE AND OLDER WOMEN. OWL IS THE ONLY NATIONAL GRASSROOTS MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATION THAT FOCUSES EXCLUSIVELY ON ISSUES, UNIQUE TO WOMEN, AS THEY AGE.

WE WORK TOWARDS HEALTH CARE COVERAGE FOR ALL, ECONOMIC SECURITY, AND ELIMINATION OF SEXISM AND AGISM. WE AIM TO HAVE OUR VOICE BE HEARD IN THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS AND THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH, THE STATE OF MARYLAND, AND MONTGOMERY

COUNTY.

I AM HERE TONITE TO VOICE OUR OPPOSITION TO COUNCIL BILL 4-11, WHICH YOU ARE CONSIDERING. THIS BILL IS THE PRODUCT OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL REFORM COMMISSION (ORC), APPOINTED BY THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY EXECUTIVE, TO DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COUNTY TO DEAL WITH THE BUDGET SHORTFALL. THE ORGANIZATIONAL REFORM COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD MAKE THE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN A REDUCED FORCE IN THE HISTORY OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY.

THE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN (CFW) BEGAN IN 1961 WHEN PRESIDENT KENNEDY ESTABLISHED THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT WAS APPOINTED ITS FIRST CHAIR. WHEN THE COMMISSION ISSUED ITS REPORT IN 1963, IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THE WORK FOR WOMEN'S EQUALITY HAD ONLY JUST BEGUN. MUCH NEEDED TO BE DONE IN THE STATES AND IN LOCALITIES BEFORE WOMEN COULD ACHIEVE THEIR BASIC RIGHTS.

BY 1963, PRESIDENT KENNEDY CREATED THE INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN WITH A CENTRAL RECOMMENDATION THAT EACH STATE FORM A SIMILAR COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN. THE BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S FOUNDATION (BPW) MADE IT A PRIORITY TO SET UP STATE COMMISSIONS.

THEY WERE JOINED BY OTHER WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS, WITH THE WOMEN'S BUREAU REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS WORKING WITH THEM.

IN 1971, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE MARYLAND GOVERNOR, THE MARYLAND COMMISSION FOR WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED BY THE LEGISLATURE TO PROMOTE THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY OF MARYLAND WOMEN.

IN THE EARLY 70'S, THE MOVEMENT FOR LOCAL COMMISSIONS GAINED MOMENTUM. IN 1971, THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL ESTABLISHED AN AD HOC COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE COUNTY. THE COMMITTEE EXAMINED THE UNMET NEEDS OF WOMEN IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY: DAY CARE FACILITIES, TRANSPORTATION, JOB EQUALITY, CAREER COUNCILING, EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, SKILLS TRAINING, AND LEGISLATION BARRING SEX DISCRIMINATION. THEIR OBJECTIVE, AS DIRECTED BY THE COUNT COUNCIL, WAS TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WOULD REMEDY PROBLEMS FOUND IN ITS REVIEW. THEIR FINAL REPORT RECOMMENDED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMISSION FOR WOMEN TO UNIQUELY DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS OF SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN THE COUNTY.

MY ORGANIZATION, THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY CHAPTER OF OWL (THE MIDLIFE AND OLDER WOMEN'S LEAGUE) BECAME INVOLVED WITH THE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN THROUGH ITS ANNUAL PROGRAM OF PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING THE WOMEN'S LEGISLATIVE BRIEFINGS

ON POLICY ISSUES, SPONSORED BY THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION ON WOMEN. WE BECAME INVOLVED WHEN OWL WAS FOUNDED IN 2008. IN NO TIME WE WERE ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS WORKING WITH THE COMMISSION TO PLAN FOR OUR MUTUAL CONCERNS AND ISSUES ON LEGISLATION AND PUBLIC POLICY GOVERNING THE QUALITY OF AGING IN MARYLAND AND MONTGOMERY COUNTY. PLANNING WITH THIS LARGE DIVERSE COMMITTEE ENABLED US TO ENGAGE WITH OTHER WOMEN'S RACIAL AND LATINO ORGANIZATIONS, INTRODUCING AGING AS A WOMEN'S ISSUE, REQUIRING EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY. THE WORKSHOPS HELD EACH YEAR FOCUSED ON OUR CONCERNS REGARDING SOCIAL SECURITY, MEDICARE, AND HEALTH CARE FOR THE AGED.

WE ARE VERY CONCERNED BY THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL REFORM COMMISSION (ORC) TO CUT AND BASICALLY DEMOLISH THE COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN'S GOAL OF PURSUING GREATER EQUALITY FOR THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY AND THE CONTINUATION OF ITS CHALLENGING FUNCTION.

THE APPROVAL OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE IN ITS PROPOSED BUDGET TO DISMANTLE THE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN, MERGING IT WITH OTHER AGENCIES, WOULD SO WEAKEN ITS FUNCTION AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS TO INCITE THE CRY OF "SHAME" BY CONCERNED WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN ADVOCATES FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN MARYLAND AND AROUND

THE COUNTRY. THE ABSENCE OF THE COMMISSION'S UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS TO RESEARCH, DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS REGARDING SUCH ACTIVITIES AS EMPLOYMENT, DAY CARE FACILITIES, JOB COUNCILING, AND EDUCATION, AND TO INFORM THE PUBLIC ON DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES AGAINST WOMEN WOULD NEGATE THE ORIGINAL COUNCIL GOALS. WE WOULD REGRET DEEPLY SUCH AN ACTION.

Montgomery County Women's Bar Association

Executive Committee 2010-2011

*Master Lisa Stearman Segel
President*

*Barbara Graham
President-Elect*

*Margaret Schweitzer
Secretary*

*Stephanie L. Fink
Treasurer*

*At-Large Members
Wanda Martinez
Moinca Harm
Susan Oldhams*



Madam President and Council Members:

Good evening. My name is Sharon Johnson, and I am here on behalf of the Montgomery County Chapter of the Women's Bar Association speaking to you in support of the Commission for Women. We strongly urge the Council to fully fund the Commission for Women in this year's budget.

The Commission for Women serves many vital functions for the women of Montgomery County which are not available through other county agencies or departments. The Women's Commission provides affordable individual and group counseling to the women of our county on a myriad of issues including career counseling and advancement; loss and grief; life transitions; job loss; and re-entering the work force. Separate and distinct from the counseling services, the Commission also offers affordable workshops and programs in areas such as career advancement, housing, sexual harassment, health, aging, financial planning, children and family issues, and separation and divorce - just to name a few. These programs and workshops empower women to be productive members of the community. Women who utilize the services of the Commission find jobs and leave the ranks of the unemployed. They pay taxes and find resources to be self supporting. They are better able to support their families - not just financially - but emotionally as well. At the end of the day these women, their children, and their families no longer rely on county services for support, thereby creating a domino effect with a positive result. Defunding the Women's Commission would ultimately leave these women without the tools they need to become independent, giving them little choice but to rely on other county agencies to provide these services. These services are not only more costly in both dollars and otherwise, but they are likely to be needed over a protracted period of time, thereby setting in motion a domino effect in reverse. This is exactly the type of structural budgetary deficiency that the Organizational Reform Commission (ORC) was asked to address and eliminate. Instead, the ORC's recommendation to dissolve the Commission for Women will promote and maintain those longstanding structural deficiencies.

Please respond to:

P.O. Box 4465, Rockville, MD 20849

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Furthermore, it was disturbing to learn that the ORC made its recommendation to the council without any real knowledge or understanding of the distinct mission of the Women's Commission or the specific details of the actual programs, services, and workshops offered by the Commission. Similarly, the ORC failed to educate themselves about the Family Justice Center, their mission, and their programs. Rather than doing their "due diligence," the ORC simply *assumed* the services provided by the Commission for Women and the Family Justice Center are indistinguishable and interchangeable. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Family Justice Center was established as a "one-stop shop" for all of the county's domestic violence programs and services. The services provided by the Women's Commission are separate and distinct from those of the Family Justice Center as they are much broader, far reaching, and intended to address completely different issues and concerns.

The Montgomery County Women's Bar Association has had a long-standing relationship with Commission for Women. We have supported the Commission by participating in their annual Law Day Conference, complementing various workshops by providing free legal advice to participants. In addition, our members participate in the "Legal Call Back" program and serve as "drop-in" volunteers to help fill the gap from recent budget cuts.

Montgomery County has long been a national leader in education, quality of life, and economic vitality. Forty years ago, we were one of the first local governments to establish a commission devoted specifically to issues which are unique to women. Since then, *thousands* of women have benefited from the services and programs offered by the Commission and in return, these women have contributed to the economic growth, quality of life, and high educational standards enjoyed here - qualities that attract people and businesses to Montgomery County. Without the Commission for Women, all of the invaluable programs, workshops, and services will be lost forever.

Eliminating the Commission for Women will do a great disservice to the women of this county and to the community as a whole. Women constitute more than fifty percent (50%) of our population. Do not turn your backs on them. Instead, stand up for our women (your wives, sisters, mothers and daughters). Reject the recommendation of the Organizational Reform Commission and keep Montgomery County moving forward. The Montgomery County chapter of the Women's Bar Association urges you to keep the Commission for Women alive with full funding and show us that you are the progressive, forward-thinking leaders you say you are.

Respectfully submitted,


Sharon Johnson

Montgomery County
Divorce Roundtable, Inc.

Testimony of John Spiegel, J.D.
Montgomery County
Divorce Roundtable

March 14, 2011

The Honorable Valerie Ervin, President
Montgomery County Council
Executive Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: FY12 budget allocation for the Montgomery County Commission for Women.

Dear Council President Ervin,

We members of the Montgomery County Divorce Roundtable¹ are writing to express our strong support for Montgomery County Commission for Women (“CFW”) and for its Counseling and Career Center.

We know from our different professional disciplines and responsibilities that the CFW, through its Counseling and Career Center, provides effective informational programming and therapeutic and job counseling services to women (and men) who are going through major life transitions, including marital separation, divorce, and career transitions. CFW helps an extremely diverse group of clients—peoples of different races, nationalities, and income levels. CFW helps many people who would have no other place to turn for this kind of vital assistance. CFW also provides important leadership for our County on issues of special importance to women.

¹ The Montgomery County Divorce Roundtable is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization composed of judges, masters, court administrative officials and other court staff, attorneys, mediators, collaborative law practitioners, psychologists, clinical social workers, and representatives from organizations with a commitment to children and families. From our interdisciplinary perspective, the Divorce Roundtable addresses recurring problems faced by separating and divorcing families, particularly as they interact with the legal system. Over the past 18 years, the Roundtable has played an important role in developing the custody/visitation mediation program and the first parenting classes. Roundtable members developed Guardian ad Litem training programs which have served as a model for trainings now presented statewide as BIA (Best Interest Attorneys) trainings, created the pilot program for supervised visitation in Montgomery County, participate as instructors at Judicial Institute programs, and host conferences for interdisciplinary professionals in the region to collaboratively address significant issues related to divorce, families, and the courts.

As you know, County Executive Isiah Leggett has adopted the recommendation of the Organization Reform Commission's Recommendations to essentially eliminate the Women's Commission and its Career and Counseling Center. In his letter to you dated February 21, 2011 it is stated on page 2, paragraph 3, that:

"I support the ORC recommendation regarding the reorganization of the Commission for Women. My FY12 Recommended Operating Budget will address the reorganization of this Commission, but in order to maintain the excellent work of the Commission for Women I will recommend a reduction, but not the elimination of all staff support. This recommendation requires implementing legislation which I will forward to the Council."

We agree with his affirmation of "the excellent work of the Commission for Women" and the decision not to support elimination of all staff support for CFW. Moreover, we are mindful of the financial constraints that require significant reductions in funding for County government.

As you formulate the FY12 Operating Budget, we urge you to implement staffing reductions for CFW in a manner that maintains the organizational integrity of this beautiful organization. It is often said during governmental budget-cutting that the goal is to trim the "fat." In that regard, CFW has always been an exemplary agency—all bones and muscle. Most of the staff have been at CFW for many years, and they treat their employment as a passionate commitment, not just a job. In addition, many committed community members, including members of the Divorce Roundtable, have volunteered our services to CFW for years. This means that the beneficial impact of the funds allocated to CFW are always multiplied by the many hours donated by staff and volunteers. Moreover, during the past years, CFW and the Counseling and Career Center have absorbed repeated and deep cuts, reducing its paid staff to a small percentage of its former size.

Even with committed staff and volunteers, there comes a breaking point, a point when an organization simply lacks the resources to accomplish its core mission. We fear that significant cuts would be devastating to CFW and to the many Montgomery County residents who look to CFW for effective help in hard times.

In this regard, we disagree with the conclusion expressed in the Final Report of the Organizational Reform Commission and County Executive Leggett's decision to adopt those recommendations as the related to the CFW, that core functions of the CFW and the Counseling and Career Center can be administered by the Family Justice Center, the Workforce Development Program, and Montgomery College. We hope that FY12 Operating Budget will allow CFW to continue providing direct services to County residents, for the following reasons:

1. While the Family Justice Center plays a key role in domestic violence situations. However, the Center serves victims only during the period of their immediate crisis. By contrast, CFW provides a wider range of services over a broader period of time. In this way, CFW and the Family Justice Center provide complementary, not duplicative, services.
2. Similarly, while the Workforce Development Program provides important services in showing clients how to apply for specific jobs, CFW provides a broader array of career counseling services and informational programming, which help County residents to reach the point where they are ready to apply for these specific jobs. Here too the services of the two organizations are complementary, not duplicative.
3. Finally, although Montgomery College provides a wide range of services to its students, most of its services are restricted to its student body, whereas CFW provides vital services available to all County residents, including economically struggling residents who would otherwise fall through holes in the County's safety net.

For all these reasons, we ask you to minimize the reductions in funding and staffing for Montgomery County Commission for Women ("CFW") and for its Counseling and Career Center in the FY12 Operating Budget. As you make any cuts, let it be with a scalpel and not an ax, so that this unique and inspiring institution can survive.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Hannon
President

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Sharon.grosfeld@gmail.com

March 29, 2011

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO BILL 4-11, Commission for Women - Reorganization

To The Honorable Montgomery County Council:

Good evening. It is a privilege to have the opportunity to present my testimony in opposition to Bill 4-11, Commission for Women – Reorganization. Unfortunately, both this legislation as well as the alternative proposal recommended by The Honorable County Executive Isiah Leggett to create an Office of Community Engagement will do more harm to the women, children and families of Montgomery County than the desired good of reducing government expenditures. Bill 4-11 relies upon the false assumption that the services currently provided by the MCCFW can be performed through other government agencies in addition to the private sector. The creation of the Office of Community Engagement, intended as an alternative to the complete demolition of the MCCFW, would mesh, albeit with devastating consequences, the operations of the MCCFW into a new entity composed of consolidated Commissions and Boards that would operate through a single centralized office. The very foreseeable consequences of both will result in more people facing crises of dramatic proportions. Proposals such as the ones embodied in Bill 4-11 and the Proposed Office of Community Engagement may be genuinely considered as a means of reducing the size and cost of government, but they have the much more detrimental effect of contributing to the ever increasing backlash against women in almost all aspects of their lives.

One practical example of the harm that would be caused by implementation of these initiatives can be seen through my work as a family lawyer. The counseling center has provided critical assistance to numerous people facing all types of personal issues that could not be addressed elsewhere. The effect has been to save families from a child's juvenile delinquency, a parent's unhealthy behavior that jeopardized the entire family's well-being, and other destructive behaviors that would have ultimately required the need for other much more costly county services if the counseling center had not been in existence. The life saving and cost saving benefits provided by the counseling center, award winning programs and invaluable publications offered exclusively by the MCCFW, cannot be duplicated in or through any other county agency.

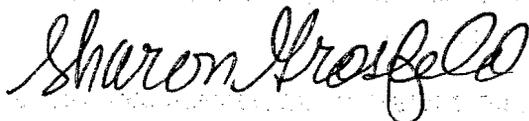
While other aspects of the county government may be broken and in need of repair, the MCCFW does not need to be fixed. Indeed, if we were "starting from scratch," the MCCFW would serve as a model of excellence in both delivery of service, as well as innovation in cost savings, contrary to the Reform Commission's report which is filled with gross inaccuracies about the work and operations of the MCCFW.

As a former President of the MCCFW, I am deeply saddened to see such legislation and proposals to eliminate the Commission being introduced. It has been bad enough to watch the Commission's budget get cut year after year, however I never imagined total elimination of the Commission would ever be on the table here in Montgomery County.

As a former state legislator who has faced budget deficits and fought a similar battle when confronted with an attack on the Maryland State Commission for Women, I am very angry to have to once again defend the existence of a Commission that has improved the lives of our residents since its inception, and continues to be a beacon of light for so many people with nowhere else to get the help offered solely by the MCCFW.

But most importantly, as a resident of Montgomery County for half of my life, the place I chose to raise a family based upon the excellent reputation of our county's schools, services and progressive values, I find even consideration of the dismantling of the MCCFW at any level unconscionable, and desperately hope that the decisions made now and in the future regarding the MCCFW are only ones that strengthen and enhance the ability of the Commission to carry out its mission, rather than engaging in a process to destroy it.

Thank you.



**Law Office of Carren S. Oler
216 North Adams Street
Rockville, MD 20850
Tel: 301-838-0035
Fax: 301-340-6947**

March 29, 2011

Testimony before the Montgomery County Council in Opposition to Bill 4-11

Personal Introduction

My name is Carren Oler, and I am an attorney who has practiced family law for about 30 years, almost all of that time here in Montgomery County, where I live.

I recognize the budget constraints facing the County, and appreciate that hard choices need to be made. Nonetheless, I believe that the Commission for Women provides vital services to Montgomery County in its current form and I ask that you understand why it is imperative that you reject this Organizational Reform Commission (ORC) recommendation to abolish the office of the Montgomery County Commission for Women.

It's hard for me to believe that in but a short few months it will have been 29 years since I was initially appointed by the late Charles Gilchrist (then the County Executive) to serve as a Commissioner on the Commission for Women. I concluded my term serving as President of the Commission in 1985 -1986. At that time my three children were then just school age, and next month, I look forward to the milestone of my youngest son turning 35! I'm delighted to report that I've become a grandmother, and I have four grandchildren and the pleasure in that role is not hyperbole.

But remarkably in all this time, the importance of the work performed by the Commission for Women in advocacy, in promoting equity, in providing practical information and education to the public, as well as the personal and career counseling programs has not diminished but is more essential than ever.

Brief Background

The Montgomery County Commission for Women (CFW) was established by an act of law in 1972 to advocate for equal rights for women. Its goals are to:

- eliminate conditions which prohibit the equal participation of women in the benefits, responsibilities and opportunities of society
- enable women to participate as equals in the community through the acquisition of skills and competencies, information, and resources
- 1973 -The CFW first opened its offices for advocacy activities
- 1976 - A counseling center then known as A Women's Place was initiated as a program of the Commission for Women

- 1977 - The New Phase Career Center was initiated
- 1991 - A Women's Place and the New Phase Career Center were combined in 1991 and called the Commission for Women Counseling and Career Center

The CFW has both advocacy and service responsibilities. The Commissioners, who are volunteers appointed by the County Executive, serve the advocacy role, providing advice to the County Executive, the County Council, the public, and agencies of the county, state, and federal government, on the issues of concern to the women of Montgomery County.

The Counseling & Career Center (CFWCCC) is the service component of the Commission for Women. The services include:

- personal counseling
- career and couples counseling
- workshops on a wide range of topics
- information and referral
- legal call-back service

The Commission for Women Counseling and Career Center provides a broad scope of programs and services designed to meet the needs and interests of women in our community while fulfilling the Commission's mandate to address inequities women experience in society. Services at the Center include:

- short-term goal oriented counseling
 - individual counseling for personal and career issues
 - couples counseling,
- workshops and seminars on a wide range of topics
- vocational and personality assessments
- Legal Call-Back Program
 Legal questions are answered by phone on a call-back basis. Local attorneys provide free telephone consultations on specific questions within a two-week period. (240) 777-8300
- information and referral services and the use of the Center's library

It is important to note that the Commission's services are available to men as well.

With all due respect - legislative attorney Robert Drummer's statement to you in the "Legislative Request Report," that many of the Commission's "activities are duplicated by other County agencies and private organizations" is flawed. For example, the relatively newly created "Family Justice Center" has a particular focus on Domestic Violence and services to victims (and their children), who find themselves in such circumstances. That agency's mission does not encompass employment counseling for a client in an intact marriage who has just lost their principal source of income because of job loss or a widow whose spouse's death has left her impoverished requiring her to find employment. The Commission for Women offers such a county resident the

essential assistance for emotional support or grief counseling, as well as employment counseling and job readiness.

The data compiled by the Commission's Decennial 2007 Report on the Status of Women in Montgomery County revealed that the face of poverty in Montgomery County is a woman's face, and much of the time it is a mother's face. This startling fact was apparent when the Report found that:

- Families with incomes below the federal poverty line comprise only 3% of the county's population, but they account for 30% of families headed by a single woman with young children; and

- Families headed by a single woman comprise 15% of county families, but they account for 47% of the county's families with incomes below the federal poverty line.

See 2009 Mothers and Poverty Agenda for Action, Page 3.

Copy of full report may be found on the Commission for Women's home page at: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cfw

As a result of this work compiling the 2007 Report, the Commission created the Mothers and Poverty (MAP) Committee in July 2007 to concentrate on this issue.

The goal of the MAP was 1) to understand why single mothers are so over-represented among the poor; 2) to identify services, programs and policies to address the needs of single mothers living below the poverty level; and 3) to advocate the implementation of those services, programs and policies. The MAP published an Agenda for Action (again available on the Commission's webpage) and the work is ongoing to create:

"a comprehensive approach that will achieve the goal of moving low-income mothers and their families out of poverty. It can't be done piecemeal. It can't be accomplished by any one agency or organization. It will require a well-coordinated system of services and changes to policies, programs and laws. Above all, it will take a commitment, a determination to end the poverty that so many single mothers and their children endure.

We hope that this Agenda for Action will serve as a guide for advocates, service providers, legislators, policymakers and administrators. It is intended to map our way toward the elimination of poverty among this most vulnerable population -- our community's single female-headed families with young children."

No other agency in the county has the Commission for Women's comprehensive oversight mission of both advocacy/policy development and direct service.

Another of the Commission's projects focuses on Immigrant Women in Montgomery County (IWIM).

U.S. Census 2000 indicates that Montgomery County has by far the largest population and percent of foreign born residents of any jurisdiction in Maryland.

The Maryland Department of Planning reports that Montgomery County's foreign born population approaches 233,000 residents--almost 27% of the county's total population.

Immigrant women often face serious challenges in the workplace, the schools, and in dealing with health and social services. Lack of knowledge and language barriers may make these women more vulnerable to abuse, harassment, discrimination and worse.

Objectives of the IWIN:

- Increase economic empowerment, viability and stability of immigrant women employed in low-wage jobs
- Improve financial literacy for immigrant women in low wage jobs
- Decrease exploitation and discrimination of low-income immigrant women
- Raise public awareness of the special challenges confronting low-income immigrant women.

What other government organization is embracing this obligation?

I frequently refer clients and colleagues to the Commission, and try not to miss the Women's Legislative Briefing each year. Many times I have served as a presenter at the Commission's legal information workshops about separation, divorce and child custody and I have also attended excellent professional training workshops sponsored by the Commission, such as for example, "A Guide to Working with Women and Shame." As a family lawyer I can report to you that in this metro area there is no "Bar Association" which offers the professional training which links one's legal expertise with the literacy in managing client emotions such as the Commission for Women does.

Continuing Education

The Montgomery County Commission for Women Counseling & Career Center is recognized by the National Board of Certified Counselors to offer continuing education for National Certified Counselors. The Commission adheres to NBCC Continuing Education Guidelines (NBCC Provider #5105). Each course meets the qualifications for three (3) contact hours of continuing education.

The Commission is also authorized by the Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners to sponsor Category I continuing education programs. Each course meets the qualifications for three (3) hours of continuing education.

Use of Volunteers and Revenue

From the Annual Report Fiscal Year 2010 (*See* CFW webpage)

The service fees charged in FY10 were \$50 per individual counseling session, \$20 per group or workshop session and \$55 for vocation interest and personality type testing. The Counseling and Career Center generated a total of \$157,625 in fees. The FY10 revenue represents 14 percent of the department's appropriation.

Volunteers, Commissioners, Interns and Externs	
Number of Participants	123
Number of Hours	12,893
Number of Work Years	6.19
Revenue Generated by Counseling Center Fees	\$157,923
Revenue Generated by Private and Corporate Contributions	\$7,025

Undesirable Outcome

The elimination of the Commission for Women will mean that there is no longer an agency within Montgomery County devoted to advocating the empowerment and advancement of women. The issues addressed by the Commission are not comprehensively addressed as matters of policy or legislation by other bodies of county government nor are the services provided by the counseling center duplicative of other county services. I respectfully urge the defeat of Bill 4-11 and the continuation of full County government support for the Montgomery County Government Commission for Women.

Respectfully submitted,



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Tuesday, March 29, 2011

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COUNTY COUNSEL IN FAVOR OF
SAVING THE WOMEN'S COMMISSION**

Please take all measures possible to avoid closing the Montgomery County Commission for Women. I write both as a concerned Montgomery County citizen who has used the services of the Womens' Commission, as an attorney who has referred many impoverished or just working women there for much needed, affordable counseling and legal information, as well as in my role as a Board member and immediate past president of the Montgomery County Divorce Roundtable. The Commission for Women has been a vital and generous partner to the Roundtable's work over many years, teaming with our volunteer lawyers who teach seminars for the Commission, publishing (in several languages) and updating a directory and of affordable and free legal services and social service resources for needy women and families, called a *Guide to Separation and Divorce* that are available nowhere else in this County, or in this state. Your phones will ring off the hook by callers wanting the information in this one resource, if it is no longer updated, published and disseminated.

The Commission for Women has also partnered with the Montgomery County Divorce Roundtable to help us publicize our own affordable public education events. The Montgomery County Divorce Roundtable is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to supporting families and children in all varieties of separation and divorce, in ways that can defuse legal processes that harm children and parents, and very often, that help parents resolve issues out of court. **We do that with the help of the Women's Commission. The Women's Commission helps SAVE the County money by being the best organization I know of for leveraging the volunteer time of many professionals to educate women about resolving their legal issues with as little resort to court involvement as is necessary and safe, and about how to take sensible informed action steps, rather than simply running to court and crying for help.**

You can take apart an important lifeline to women and children in a pen stroke, but to do so will be to put out a light that cannot easily be revived. Since 1972, the Women's Commission is part of what makes Montgomery County Maryland a national leader in human rights efforts. For example, in 2010, the Commission planned and implemented the 40th annual convention of the National Association of Commissions for Women, bringing together 170 people from across the country to share information and best practices for supporting the rights and interests of women and families. **If you put out the light at the Women's' Commission, you send the County back 60 years or so, not only in its role as a national leader, but in its ability to foster the well being of its children – who are most often in the care of women.**

Very truly yours,

Anne Debelius LoPiano

**Testimony of
Colleen Kelly
Resident of Montgomery County, Maryland
Before the
Montgomery County Council
Hearing on
Bill 4-11, Commission for Women – Reorganization
March 29, 2011**

Good evening members of the County Council. Thank you for this opportunity to testify at this evening's hearing and present my views as a concerned resident of Montgomery County in regard to Bill 4-11 concerning the reorganization of the Montgomery County Commission for Women (CFW).

My name is Colleen Kelly, and I have been a proud resident, taxpayer and voter in Montgomery County for 22 years. Over the past 7 months I have volunteered several hours a week at the CFW's Counseling and Career Center. This volunteer experience is why Bill 4-11 caught my attention.

There are three points of concern that I would like to address to the County Council as to why I oppose Bill 4-11:

First, the recommendation by the Organizational Reform Commission (ORC) to restructure the CFW and eliminate its Counseling and Career Center because alternative services exist is based on inaccurate information. It is my understanding that Bill 4-11 was drafted as a result of conclusions reached by the ORC. Due to my experience with the CFW and my knowledge of the alternative service providers listed in the ORC report, I am not convinced that services that duplicate those at the CFW's Counseling and Career Center currently exist in Montgomery County. Consequently, the recommendation by the ORC in regard to the CFW's counseling and career center is invalid and by relying on this information, Bill 4-11 will be detrimental to thousands of Montgomery County women and families, who will no longer have access to these services.

I reviewed the ORC report as it pertains to the CFW and do agree with the ORC's statement that the CFW has served a very important function in our community. In fact, I would submit that it continues to do so. The part of the report that confuses me, however, is the premise that the CFW's Counseling and Career Center activities are duplicative. The ORC states that "the Family Justice Center, the County's Workforce Development Program, Montgomery College and private entities and religious organizations" offer the same affordable personal and career counseling, as well as the wide range of workshops currently offered at the CFW. As a volunteer at the CFW I have interacted with these other agencies and have found that while they offer critical complementary services, they do not provide the kind of longer term assistance or cover the wide range of issues that residents find at the CFW.

The CFW's Counseling and Career Center is not a crisis center. The CFW's Counseling and Career Center is where the crisis centers send their clients after the immediate crisis has been resolved. The CFW's Counseling and Career Center provides support to individuals for several months after a crisis. The CFW's Counseling and Career Center also helps to avoid crisis, by providing support and resources to Montgomery County residents who find themselves struggling with such personal challenges as job loss, financial pressures, divorce and separation, parenting issues, and more. The CFW Counseling and Career Center offers resources, personal counseling and a wide variety of workshops every week to help keep Montgomery County residents functioning to the best of their abilities during difficult transitional times.

Over the past 6 weeks, since reviewing the ORC report, I have made additional telephone calls and surveyed the clients that come into the counseling center, and have been convinced that the services of the CFW are not available elsewhere in Montgomery County. This being the case, I am concerned as to where the hundreds of clients of the CFW's Counseling and Career Center will turn – will they put additional demands on our already overworked police departments, fire departments and hospital emergency rooms?

I strongly urge the County Council to further study this situation before considering a restructuring of the CFW. The residents of Montgomery County need access to the affordable counseling services and workshops that have served our community so well over the past three decades.

Second, I believe Bill 4-11 will eliminate a cost effective program. The CFW's Counseling and Career Center is fortified by over 120 community volunteers, contributing over 13,000 labor hours of their time each year. This is the equivalent of 6 full time employees - at no cost to taxpayers. Additionally, clients who come into the counseling and career center pay for the counseling sessions and workshops, generating over \$100,000 in additional income for Montgomery County every year. This partnership between government and community volunteers to keep these important affordable services available to county residents should be held up as a model, not eliminated.

I strongly encourage the County Council to establish a sound business plan to not only keep the CFW Counseling and Career Center in business, but to increase its visibility throughout the county so that it will generate considerably more income for Montgomery County.

And finally, my third concern is that if the CFW's advocacy function is restructured into simply "an advisory committee attached to another department" the leadership and innovation that Montgomery County has shown across the nation on such issues as sexual harassment, pay equity, gender equity in schools, girls in technology, and violent crimes against women will cease. Several important Maryland resources will disappear, as well as revenue opportunities.

Less than a year ago the Montgomery County CFW was show-cased in a national leadership role as it hosted the 40th Annual National Association of Commissions for

Womens' conference here in Rockville, Maryland. This conference brought in representatives from 29 states. Not only was this event significant because it underscored the Montgomery County's CFW's national leadership, but it brought tax revenue into our county as almost 200 conferees stayed at the Rockville Hilton and bought meals at local eateries. The hotel tax alone would be over \$5000. This accomplishment should be celebrated and encouraged – not blatantly disregarded as Bill 4-11 does.

For the past 31 years, the Montgomery County CFW has taken a leadership role on state legislative issues affecting women by hosting an annual Women's Legislative Briefing. This event has grown to include 700 attendees from all around the state. This function is self supporting with over 80 co-sponsors, and like other functions organized by the CFW, brings revenue into Montgomery County.

The projects initiated by the CFW have won national achievement awards four times since 2000. Additionally, Montgomery County's close proximity to the nation's capital has facilitated the ability of the CFW to influence federal policy on behalf of issues impacting women and families, and participate in pertinent White House discussions. If Bill 4-11 is enacted these opportunities will be wasted.

Over the years, the CFW has produced reports, brochures, handbooks, studies and surveys. It has hosted multi-day conferences and held public hearings and issue forums. The CFW has established a computer camp for girls, and developed on-line tool kits and on-line archives. These numerous accomplishments have been possible due not only to the dedicated volunteers who have been appointed to the independent Commission for Women, but also the very hardworking support staff. It is not operationally feasible to expect that this level of achievement, or anything close to it, can continue while sharing 4 support staff with 10 other service groups spread out over 6 locations.

Montgomery County has done a lot to raise awareness for women's issues over the past 40 years. But we have a long way to go. Over the past several years the CFW's budget and staff has been slowly eliminated. The demise of the CFW has been the equivalent of death by 1,000 cuts and I am afraid that eliminating the counseling and career center and shoving the Commission for Women into the layers of bureaucracy within a county agency will be the final cuts that cause the end of Montgomery County's progressive leadership for women's issues.

When I introduced myself, I stated that I am a "proud" resident of Montgomery County. I didn't make that statement lightly. I am very proud to be a resident of one of the nation's most progressive and innovative counties. I am impressed and proud when I hear from family and friends from around the country who have heard on their local news of something Montgomery County has accomplished. Montgomery County has been a leader for governments across the nation in many areas – certainly education and also on women's issues. I truly hope that our current budget crisis will not mark the end of this county's focus and leadership on women's issues.

Please do not support the passage of Bill 4-11.

Referral Resources for CFW Counseling and Career Center Clients
3/14/2011

Affiliated Community Counselors, Inc.

50 West Montgomery Avenue, Suite 110

Rockville, MD 20850

301-251-8965

accirockville@gmail.com

<http://www.accirockville.org/>

A not-for-profit mental health clinic providing individual, couple, family and group counseling and therapy for adults, adolescents, and children. ACCI has served the Rockville area for more than 25 years.

Jewish Social Service Agency

Rockville Office

301-881-3700

Gaithersburg Office

301-990-6880

Silver Spring Office

301-587-9666

<http://www.jssa.org/>

Provides individual and group therapy, support groups, and vocational services.

Child Center and Adult Services

301-978-9750

<http://www.ccascounseling.org/>

Provides psychological evaluations, counseling and therapy for families and children.

Family Services Agency, Inc.

301-840-3200

<http://www.familyservicesagency.org/>

Offers individual, marital, family, child, adolescent and group therapy.

Washington Pastoral Counseling Services

301-681-3201

<http://www.wpcs.org/>

Provides professional counseling for individuals, couples and families.

Montgomery Works

Wheaton Office

301-946-1806

Germantown Office

240-777-2050

http://www.montgomeryworks.com/workshops_training.asp

<http://www.montgomeryworks.com/calendar.asp>

http://montgomeryworks.org/upcoming_events.asp

Workshops and training are provided on topics such as job hunting, career development, and computer training. The the links above show information for the calendar of events for trainings for March and April at the Germantown and Wheaton location. MontgomeryWorks programs change monthly depending on need, availability of trainers, and space.

**Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation
Professional Outplacement Assistance Center (POAC)**

410-290-2600

<http://www.dllr.state.md.us/poac/>

Provides career assistance for individuals who are in the professional, technical and managerial occupations.

Rockville Women's Business Center

301-315-8096

<http://www.rockvillewbc.org/training.html>

Offers workshops and individual coaching for women interested in starting a business

CASA of Maryland: Center for Employment and Leadership

Takoma Park

301-431-3479

Silver Spring

401-431-4185

Germantown

240-777-3499

http://www.casademaryland.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=23&Itemid=74

Serves low-income Latino and African immigrants with life skills and training for employment. Works with employers to promote employment opportunities

National Family Resiliency Center

301-610-5666

<http://www.divorceabc.com/>

Offers educational seminars, workshop and mediation services for divorcing families as well as individual, group and family counseling.

Washington Metropolitan Oasis

301-469-6800

<http://www.oasisnet.org/Cities/WashingtonDCarea.aspx>

An adult educational center for those 55 and over offering classes and discussion groups.

Montgomery College

240-567-5188

<http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/wdce/ce/careerworkskills.html>

Provides training for retirement planning, financial planning and investment as well as workforce and continuing education courses in business, language skills, technical education, health sciences, art and design.

Conflict Resolution Center of Montgomery County

301-942-7700

<http://www.crcmc.org/whatweoffer/training.html>

Offers mediation services to address conflict issues in the workplace, family, neighborhoods, etc.

Spanish Catholic Center

301-740-2523

<http://www.catholiccharitiesdc.org/page.aspx?pid=357>

Provides social services, job, and legal assistance for the Spanish speaking population.

Families Foremost Center (FFC)

Mental Health Association of Montgomery County

1109 Spring Street, Suite 300 in Silver Spring

(301) 585-3424

<http://www.mhamc.org/html/pages/services/index.html>

Provides free, comprehensive services for pregnant women and parents with young children (less than four years of age). Services include: adult education (ABE/GED/ESOL) classes, in-home intervention services, parent education classes, computer literacy classes, health education classes, employment readiness classes, developmental infant and toddler programs, parent-child activities, family literacy activities, Reading is Fundamental, peer support and case management.

Montgomery County Department of Economic Development

240-777-2000

http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dedtml.asp?url=/content/ded/tech_transfer/bew_resources.asp

Administers networking groups for female business owners as well as a woman owned business certification program. The website provides links to other resources for female entrepreneurs.

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

Behavioral Health and Crisis Services

240-777-1770

http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhstmpl.asp?url=/content/hhs/bhcs/mhs_as.asp

Offers referrals for mental health and substance abuse services for eligible individuals. Provides assistance to victims of domestic violence through advocacy and counseling.

Tess Community Center

301-565-7675

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhstmpl.asp?url=/content/hhs/offices/tess.asp>

In collaboration with HHS, Mary Center & Impact Silver Spring, bilingual Community Connectors meet with residents in the TESS office and in the community, providing information, resources and assistance to families and individuals. Free legal advice is provided to low-income families at a walk-in clinic on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month.