MARYLAND

COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022

2022

2022 Annual Report

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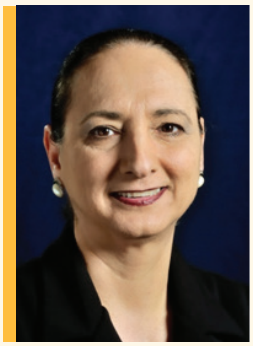
THE MARYLAND COMMISSION FOR WOMEN 2021 - 2022



Carole Jaar Sepe
Second Vice Chair

Yun Jung Yang
Chair

Tawanda Bailey
First Vice Chair

The Maryland Commission for Women was first established in 1965 and set in state law in 1971. An office in the Department of Human Services, the Commission is a 25-member advisory board whose legislative mandate includes the following duties:

- Study the status of women in our state
- Recommend methods of overcoming discrimination
- Recognize women's accomplishments and contributions
- Provide informed advice to the executive and legislative branches of government on the issues concerning the women of our state

Commissioners are appointed by the Governor to four-year terms, with confirmation by the Maryland State Senate, and serve without compensation.

JULY 2021 – JUNE 2022 COMMISSIONERS

Andrea G. Bottner
Montgomery County

Tammy Bresnahan
Anne Arundel County

Deborah L. Cartee
Anne Arundel County

Essita R. Duncan
Prince George's County

Judith Emmel
Anne Arundel County

Kathryn M. Fiddler
Wicomico County

Kristi S. Halford
Harford County

Eugenia B. Henry
Baltimore County

D. Kaprece James
Charles County

Lauren M. Lambert
Prince George's County

Patricia McHugh Lambert
Carroll County

Beth Anne Langrell
Talbot County

Brenda J. McChriston
Howard County

Maria B. Menucci, M.D.
Howard County

Roberta Pardo
Anne Arundel County

Jenny Peña-Dias
Baltimore City

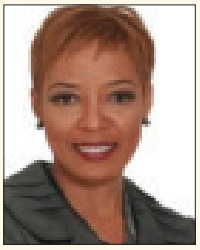
Luanne Ruddell
Garrett County

Corinna Yi-Yuan Kuo Shen
Montgomery County

Maxine Griffin Somerville
Charles County

Evelyne S. Steward
Montgomery County

Lenita Walker
Prince George's County


Tamara England Wilson
Baltimore City

Staff:

Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director

Tammy Wise, Management Associate

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

Maryland Department of Human Services
Lourdes R. Padilla

The Maryland Department of Human Services is the state's primary social service provider, serving more than one million people each year. Through its 24 local departments of social services, DHS aggressively pursues opportunities to assist people in economic need, provide preventive services and protect vulnerable children and adults in each of Maryland's 23 counties and Baltimore City.

The Department is also home to the Maryland Commission for Women. The Commission's role as an advocate for the women and girls of our state contributes to DHS's work to fulfill its mission by providing valued advice on issues including women's health, work and family, childcare access, domestic violence and sexual assault, human trafficking, mothers and poverty, equal access to opportunity and much more.

The Commission not only recognizes women's contributions to our state, but also encourages young women to prepare for leadership in the future. DHS extends congratulations to each of the five extraordinary women inducted into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame, and each of the exceptional young ladies honored with Maryland Young Women Leaders Awards in 2022. Although these celebrations were virtual again this year, their significance is not diminished.

The Commission's publication of *At the Heart of the Pandemic: Maryland Women and the COVID-19 Crisis* in April of this year not only presents valuable information and recommendations we can use in making policy and program but is also testament to how hard the commissioners continued to work despite the restrictions of the pandemic.

DHS appreciates the effort, insight, expertise, and time contributed by the 25 volunteer members of the Commission for Women, helping DHS advance Maryland as a place where all our residents may lead productive lives as respected members of our community. We take pride in the Commission as our partner in the pursuit of our vision of Maryland as a state where people may independently support themselves and their families and where every person is safe from abuse and neglect.

Lourdes R. Padilla

Lourdes R. Padilla
Secretary, Maryland Department of Human Services

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Yun Jung Yang, Esq.

Being elected to a leadership position by a board of such amazingly talented and dedicated women has been an honor and a privilege, and a huge responsibility. As this program year began, the Maryland Commission for Women had just published its research project on the status of women in the state and had just launched the next chapter of that research, studying the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on Maryland women. That research, lead by the Commission's Status of Women in Maryland (SWiM) Committee was completed with the publication of its report on April 4. With its 10 recommendations for state policy and legislation and three recommendations for the MCW's own outreach and advocacy work, the report gave the Commission a path toward a more effective and inclusive agenda for years to come.

The Commission's Achievement and Recognition Committee (ARC) identified five extraordinary women to induct into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame in March of 2022, and five outstanding high school students to honor with the Maryland Young Women Leaders Award. In our efforts to encourage young women to prepare for leadership roles, it is important to uncover and preserve the work of women whose accomplishments and contributions are of historic significance.

The Commission's Policy and Legislation (PAL) Committee identified 12 bills on six important issues to support in the Maryland General Assembly, submitting testimony on concerns ranging from electronic stalking to paid family leave insurance.

My second term as Chair of the Commission was complete in June 2022 and, as I submit this final message as Chair, I cannot help but reflect on the enormous contribution of time, expertise, talent, and wisdom made by our 25 Commissioners. The issues with which the MCW must concern itself are complicated, serious, and sometimes contentious. It is not always easy to reach consensus on the position that, without political consideration, is truly best for the women of our state. Yet, our Commissioners have been willing to engage in productive debate on even the most challenging questions and to put personal concerns aside to advocate for the women and girls of Maryland.

I am so grateful and so honored that these extraordinary women have twice elected me to chair the Commission for Women. I can only thank them for this opportunity to serve and for all that they each have contributed. My appreciation goes especially to the chairs and vice chairs of the Commission's committees, and to my sister officers – Tawanda Bailey and Carole Jaar Sepe – who gave so much of their time, and so much of their wise insight, to the decisions and just plain hard work we undertook over the past four years.

Much appreciation also goes to the leadership of the Department of Human Services for its support of the work of the Maryland Commission for Women.

We are on the right track, moving forward, and I will be forever proud of our work.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Judith Vaughan-Prather

After a year of meeting virtually, due to the continuing and ever-evolving pandemic, the MCW held its annual planning meeting on June 17, 2021. The Commission's research report, *Maryland Women – A Status Report,* had just been published on June 10, and the Commission met to review its work over the previous year and to set its agenda for FY 22.

The Commissioners adopted a busy workplan that included:

- An active Policy and Legislation (PAL) committee to conduct the Commission's legislative advocacy, virtually, in the 2022 session of the Maryland General Assembly
- The Maryland Women's Hall of Fame and Maryland Young Women Leaders Awards program, culminating with the virtual induction and award presentation in March 2022
- Phase III of the Status of Women in Maryland (SWiM) research project, to study the impact of the pandemic on the women of the state.

All but the June Commission meetings in FY 22 were held on the Google Meet virtual platform, and work proceeded for the most part virtually on the Commission's projects. The staff continued to work remotely four days per week, coming into the office one day per week.

Each of the committees established to pursue the Commission's goals worked diligently over the year, despite the continuing pandemic. The reports of each of the three committee's activities will follow, but throughout the year, the Commission for Women continued its work in other areas as well, including:

- The MCW was originally established by the Governor in 1965 and it was active, somewhat off and on during the following six years. It was finally set in state law in 1971 making 2021 the 50th anniversary of the MCW's enabling legislation. The semicentennial was commemorated with special signature lines and announcements throughout the first half of the program year.
- On July 19, 2021 MCW Chair Yang and the Executive Director represented the MCW at the annual conference of the National Association of Commissions for Women, held in Leesburg, Virginia this year.
- On September 8, Commission Chair Yang and Commissioner Wilson presented a briefing on the recently published Status of Women in Maryland research project to the Maryland General Assembly's Joint Committee on Children, Youth and Families.
- On September 12, the Executive Director represented the Commission at the unveiling of an historic marker honoring two Maryland suffragists, placed by the Maryland Women's Heritage Center at the Sandy Spring Museum in Montgomery County.
- The Commission contributed support for the September 14 "Call to Action" conference sponsored by the

Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA).

- On September 14, Commission Chair Yang and SWiM Committee Chair Wilson presented another briefing on the Status Report to the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights.
- Throughout the year, Commissioners represented the Commission on 10 other community organizations, including:
    - Maryland Women's Heritage Center – Chair Yang
    - The Foundation for the MCW – Chair Yang, Commissioners Henry, Shen and Steward
    - The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women – Commissioner Langrell
    - The Women's Legislative Briefing Planning Committee – Commissioner McChriston
    - Women Moving Forward Conference Planning Committee – Commissioners Bottner and McChriston
    - Maternal Mortality Review Stakeholders Group – Commissioner Peña-Dias
    - Maryland SAFE Center – Commissioner Somerville
    - Maryland Women's History Museum – Commissioner Emmel
    - Maryland 250 Commission – Commissioner Emmel
    - National Association of Commissions for Women – Executive Director Vaughan-Prather
- At its October 21, 2021 meeting, the Commission received a briefing from the new Women Veterans/ Inclusion Program Manager at the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs whose primary mission is to ensure that women veterans and their family members are aware of and have access to the benefits they earned through their service.
- The Commission sponsored the November 13 virtual MLAW Fall Conference at the "Platinum" ($500) level and purchased 26 admissions for 11 MCW representatives, and 15 representatives of 10 county Commissions for Women.
- In December, the MCW wrote to the Wicomico County Council and County Executive commending them on the re-establishment of the Commission for Women in that county. The MCW also wrote to the Mayor and Council of Baltimore City urging the re-activation of the city's Commission for Women for which no commissioners had been appointed since 2020. In addition, the MCW wrote to the county governments of the remaining counties in Maryland that still did not have a Commission for Women: Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne, Somerset, and Talbot Counties. As of this writing, commissioners have been appointed to and a chair designated for the Wicomico County CFW; commissioners are being recruited for the Baltimore City CFW; and Cecil County has appointed its commissioners to its newly re-established CFW. At their outreach, the MCW Executive Director consulted with staff in all three jurisdictions, and with the Mercer County, NJ, CFW about effective operations of Commissions for Women in their jurisdictions. There are now Commissions for Women in 17 of Maryland's 24 major jurisdictions, up from 14 a year ago.
- At the invitation of the Chair of the Washington County CFW, MCW Chair Yang and the Executive

Director presented a briefing about the MCW's work to that CFW at its virtual meeting on January 12, 2022.

- March 2022 Women's History Month activities included distributing announcements of:
    - Women's History Month,
    - The Maryland Women's Hall of Fame
    - International Women's Day and
    - Equal Pay Day
- On March 28, the MCW published a Statement of Solidarity with Women of Ukraine and the people of Ukraine in support of their struggle against the Russian invasion and the attack on democracy that war represents.
- On March 30, at the invitation of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Commission Chair Yang, ARC Committee Chair Pardo and SWiM Committee Chair Wilson presented a briefing on the MCW's work during a special Women's History Month departmental staff meeting.
- Throughout the year, the Commission issued a total of 53 communiques to its distribution lists of more than 2150 email recipients and more than 2000 Facebook followers. These messages included:
    - 12 Health Alerts
    - 30 Issue Alerts
    - 11 Facebook Posts
- On May 19, the MCW convened the now-annual Commissions for Women (CFW) Roundtable Meeting, inviting all 17 CFWs to participate, to share successful strategies, challenges and information. Fourteen of those 17 CFWs joined the meeting, with more than 50 commissioners attending. They received a briefing from Rose Holandez of the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, and a presentation about the recently published report on Maryland Women and the Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis, before discussing the projects and initiatives of each CFW.
- The Women's Law Center of Maryland held an event on May 19 commemorating its 50th anniversary of service to and advocacy for women in the state. The MCW purchased a $300 ad in the event's program book to support the Center's work.
- On June 4, the MCW Chair brought greetings to the Grand Reopening of the Maryland Women's Heritage Center in its new location in Marion House, the former Women's Industrial Exchange Building in Baltimore. Executive Director Vaughan-Prather accompanied her to the event.
- At the invitation of the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs, MCW Chair Yang provided pre-recorded video greetings to the first annual conference in the state for women veterans, held June 8 and 9.
- On June 16, 2022, as the state and the nation move toward "the new normal," the Commission met for the final time - and for the first time in-person - this year to set its priorities and initiatives, to establish its committees, elect new officers and appoint its liaisons for the coming program year. It bid farewell to two commissioners whose terms were complete and welcomed newly appointed commissioners.

Kristi S. Halford

POLICY AND LEGISLATION (PAL) COMMITTEE

Chair: *Kristi Halford*
Vice Chair: *Essita Duncan*

Members: *Tawanda Bailey, Andrea Bottner, Tammy Bresnahan, Jenny Peña-Dias, Patricia McHugh Lambert, Beth Anne Langrell, Brenda McChriston, Carole Jaar Sepe, Yun Jung Yang*

Essita Duncan

The Maryland Commission for Women is charged by its enabling statute with the responsibility to "inform the executive and legislative branches of government on issues concerning women, including offering testimony on the issues before legislative and administrative bodies." To carry out that mandate, the Commission prepared and submitted written testimony to the Maryland General Assembly in support of six legislative initiatives (12 bills total) under consideration in the 2022 session. Four of those initiatives passed, two of which were vetoed and the Maryland General Assembly voted to override those vetoes. The remaining two did not pass this year.

HB0008/SB00275: Time to Care Act:
Establishes the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program in the Maryland Department of Labor to provide benefits to individuals who take leave from employment to care for new children, family members with serious health conditions or disabilities, or themselves; establishes a special non-lapsing Family and Medical Leave Insurance Fund; requires that, beginning January 1, 2023, employees, employers with more than 15 employees, and self-employed individuals must contribute to the Fund at a percentage rate to be established by the Secretary of Labor.
Passed with a veto override

HB0937/SB0890 Abortion Care Access Act of 2022:
Establishes an Abortion Care Clinical Training Program in the Maryland Department of Health to ensure that there are a sufficient number of health professionals to provide abortion care in the state; establishes an Abortion Care Clinical Training Program Fund; establishes requirements regarding abortion services, including provision and coverage requirements, for the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and insurers; and requires the Governor to include in the annual budget an appropriation of $3,500,000 to the Program.
Passed with a veto override

HB0296/SB0280 Interim and Temporary Protective Order – Virtual Petition and Hearing:
Makes it possible for a petitioner who is receiving medical treatment at a hospital or in certain programs and centers to electronically file a petition for a temporary protective order while there and requires the court that receives an electronically filed petition to hold a hearing through video conferencing either the same or next business day.
Passed, sent to Governor for signature

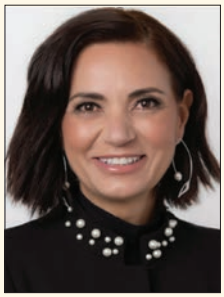
HB0148/SB0328 Stalking:
Alters the definition of stalking to include conduct that occurs in person, through electronic communication, or using certain devices.
Passed, sent to Governor for signature

HB0454/SB0776 Prevention of Forced Infant Separation Act:
Would have required the Department of Corrections to allow an incarcerated woman who is either pregnant or who recently gave birth to transfer to the prerelease unit for women and would have established a Healthy Start Bonding Program to facilitate strong bonds between incarcerated women and their children.
Died in Committee

HB0153/SB0033 Criminal Law - Sexual Crimes - Repeal of Spousal Defense:
Known as the "Love is No Defense Act," this bill would have removed the use the defendant's marriage to the victim as a defense against charges of sexual assault.
Died at the end of session

In addition to submitting written testimony on these bills, the Commission was a "Platinum Sponsor" of the **Annual Fall Conference of the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW)** and covered the registration costs of 26 representatives of Commissions for Women across the state. Of those, 15 were commissioners representing 10 different county commissions, and 11 were MCW representatives. Commissioner Langrell served as the moderator for one of the panel discussions for the conference which was attended by more than 300. Commissioner Langrell also served as a liaison to MLAW on behalf of the MCW throughout the legislative season.

MCW also participated as a community sponsor of the January 30, 2022 **Women's Legislative Briefing**, held virtually again this year. Coordinated by the Montgomery County Commission for Women, it was attended by almost 600 women and men from across the state. Commissioner McChriston represented the MCW on the planning committee for the Briefing.



Roberta Pardo

ACHIEVEMENT AND RECOGNITION COMMITTEE (ARC)

MARYLAND WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME
MARYLAND YOUNG WOMEN LEADERS AWARDS

Chair: *Roberta Pardo*

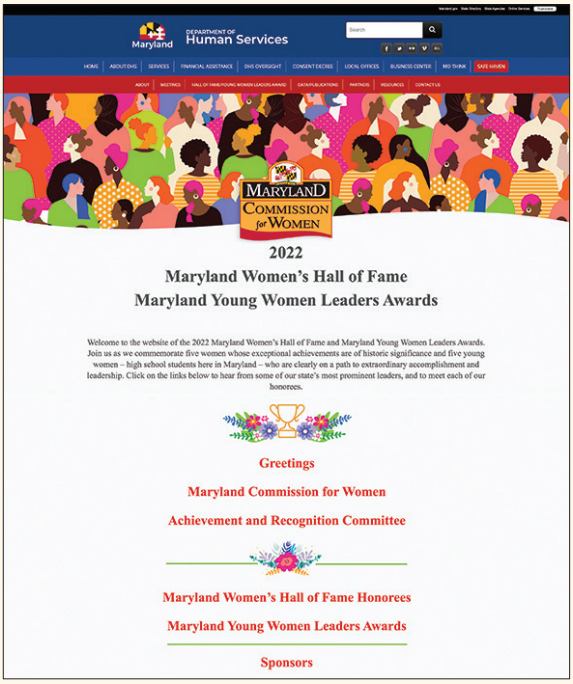
Vice Chair for Hall of Fame: *Maxine Griffin Somerville*

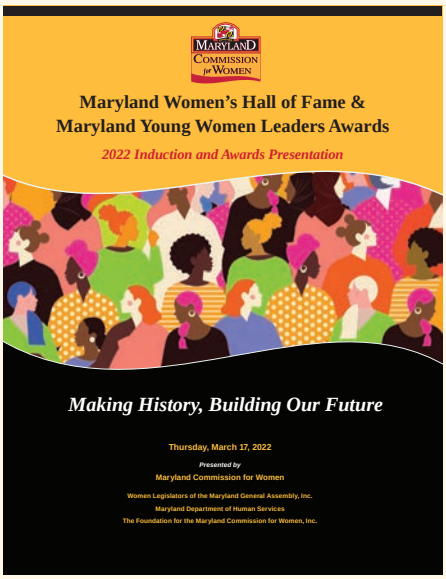
Vice Chair for Young Women Leaders: *Lauren M. Lambert*

Members: *Andrea Bottner, Deborah Cartee, Judith Emmel, Corinna Shen, Brenda McChriston, Evelyne Steward Yun Jung Yang, Tawanda Bailey, Carole Jaar Sepe*

On Thursday, March 17, 2022 the Maryland Commission for Women inducted five women into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame and presented the 2022 Maryland Young Women Leaders Award to five high school students.

Among the duties assigned to the Commission by its enabling legislation is the recognition of women's accomplishments and contributions. Each year, the Commission's Achievement and Recognition Committee coordinates the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame and Maryland Young Women Leaders Awards program. The commissioners develop the program, issue the calls for nominations, establish and coordinate the selection committees and the selection process and plan the awards and induction for the honorees. It is a difficult, but gratifying task, as the goal is to memorialize women of extraordinary accomplishments and to recognize and encourage the development of future women leaders. This year's theme, *Making History, Building Our Future* perfectly describes the women honored in 2022.





Maxine Griffin
Somerville

The **Maryland Women's Hall of Fame** was established in 1985 as a partnership between the Maryland Commission for Women and the Women Legislators of Maryland to memorialize and honor Maryland women whose lives and work are of historic significance to the health, economic, political and cultural history of the state. The biographies of the inductees are posted permanently on the website of the Maryland State Archives at https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/educ/exhibits/womenshallfame/html/index.html

THE 2022 INDUCTEES INTO THE MARYLAND WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME ARE:

Dorothy (Dottie) Toplitzky Blum (1924 – 1980), Computer Scientist, Cryptanalyst, Information Technology Pioneer, former Chief of the NSA Computer Operations Organization (C7), the only woman manager in the organization at the time

Mary Cleave, Ph.D., P.E., NASA Astronaut, Environmental Engineer, flight engineer for two Space Shuttle missions, first woman to lead NASA's Science Directorate

Gloria Richardson (1922 – 2021), Civil Rights Activist, influential and iconic leader in the Civil Rights Movement, first woman to lead a Civil Rights organization outside of the deep south

Beatrice (Bea) Rodgers, MSW, Community Activist for Persons with Disabilities, former Director of the Governor's Office for Individuals with Disabilities, founder/leader of numerous community service organizations

Odessa M. Shannon (1928 – 2020), National Program Director for the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, first black woman elected to the Montgomery County School Board, first woman Special Assistant to the Montgomery County Executive, lifelong advocate for human/civil rights

Lauren M. Lambert

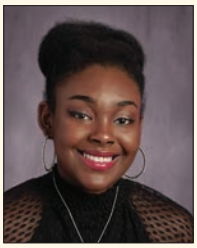
The **Maryland Young Women Leaders Award** was first established as the Women of Tomorrow Award in 1997 to recognize extraordinary young women who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, academic achievement, and outstanding community service. In 2021, the name of the Award was changed to better reflect its purpose of recognizing and encouraging future women leaders. With a generous donation from the Pai Ping Foundation, the Foundation for the Maryland Commission for Women provided a $500 scholastic award to each of the five honorees. Altogether, 35 nominations were received from 12 of Maryland's 24 major jurisdictions.

After a careful review of all the nominations, the following five exceptional young women were selected to receive the 2022 Maryland Young Women Leaders Award:

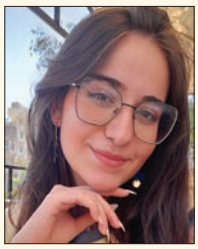
MARYLAND YOUNG WOMEN LEADERS AWARD:

Anna Devoto,
Southern High School,
Anne Arundel County

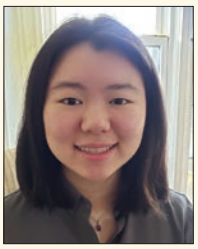
Sara Huelskamp,
Northern Garrett High
School, Garrett County



Gabrielle Moore,
St. Charles High School,
Charles County

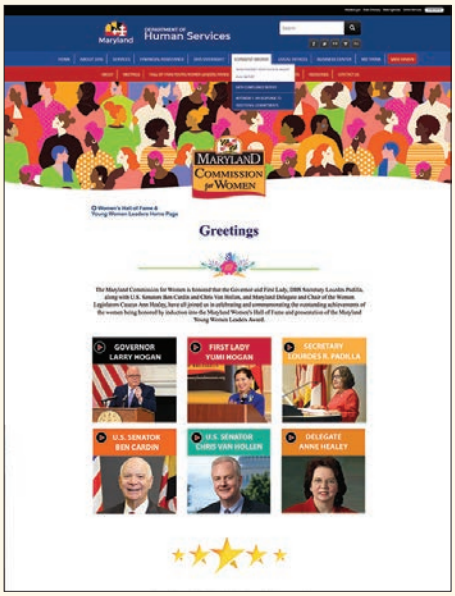


Mirna Obeid,
Clarksburg High School,
Montgomery County



Allison Xu,
Walter Johnson High School,
Montgomery County

Because the continuing pandemic made it unreasonable again this year to hold a large in-person event to present the awards and induct the honorees into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame, a special website was created. It features the biography and video-recorded remarks from each honoree, with greetings from Maryland's First Lady Yumi Hogan, U.S. Senators Cardin and Van Hollen, DHS Secretary Lourdes Padilla, Maryland State Delegate Anne Healey, chair of the Caucus of Maryland Women Legislators, and representatives of the Maryland Commission for Women. The site, designed and created by the DHS Communications staff, was launched on Thursday, March 17 and may be viewed at https://dhs.maryland.gov/2022-maryland-womens-hall-fame-maryland-young-women-leaders-awards/.



Much appreciation also goes to the representatives of state women's organizations who volunteered their time and considerable expertise to the selection of the 2022 honorees:

2022 Maryland Women's Hall of Fame Selection Committee

Margie Kotzalas, Business & Professional Women of Maryland (BPW/MD)

Rachel Mygatt, Maryland Women's Heritage Center (MWHC)

Roberta Pardo, Maryland Commission for Women

Maxine Griffin Somerville, Maryland Commission for Women

2022 Maryland Young Women Leaders Award Selection Committee

Sharon Johnson, Maryland Women's Bar Association

Tracy Lantz, American Association of University of Women (AAUW MD)

Toni St. John, Women's Law Center of Maryland

Rebecca Wise, Business & Professional Women of Maryland (BPW/MD)

Lauren Lambert, Commissioner, Maryland Commission for Women

Rev. Tamara E. Wilson

STATUS OF WOMEN IN MARYLAND

(SWiM) Committee

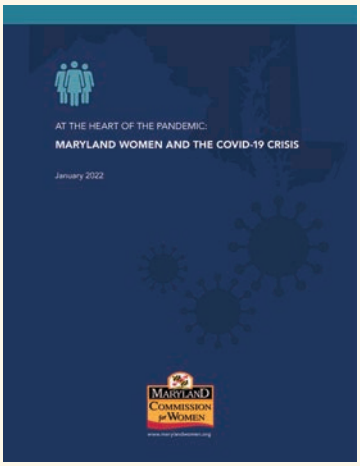
AT THE HEART OF THE PANDEMIC: MARYLAND WOMEN AND THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Chair: *Tamara E. Wilson, Rev. D.*
Vice Chair: *Patricia M. Lambert, Esq.*

Members: *Essita Duncan, Kristi Halford, Beth Anne Langrell, Luanne Ruddell, Corinna Shen, Maxine Somerville, Evelyne Steward, Maria Menucci, Tawanda Bailey, Carole Jaar Sepe, Yun Jung Yang*

Patricia McHugh Lambert
Carroll County

In 2016, the Maryland Commission for Women launched the first phase of its Status of Women in Maryland (SWiM) initiative with its *Voices of Maryland Women Listening Tour,* traveling more than 3,000 miles across the state over a two-year period to conduct 19 public forums. Maryland women talked to us about the challenges they face in their everyday lives. In addition, a survey that was available in four languages gathered further information from women who may not have been able to attend these in-person forums. **In Their Own Words: The Voices of Maryland Women,** published in August 2018, identified the top five issues presented by the women who participated in the Listening Tour and survey.



The Commission then undertook Phase II of the initiative: extracting and compiling information about women from statistics published by a range of federal and state agencies as well as private research and policy firms. **Maryland Women – A Status Report** was published in April 2021.

Even before work on that initiative was complete, research began to explore the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on the women of this state.

As the worldwide pandemic spread into the U.S. and then into Maryland, public schools and government offices closed on March 12, 2020, and then non-essential businesses were ordered to close on March 23. Now, two years later, communities, businesses and schools are trying to return to "normal," or to establish a "new normal." A new report issued by the Maryland Commission for Women finds that, as hard as this pandemic has been on everyone, it has been especially difficult for women.

Numerous previous studies established that the majority of employees in "essential worker" jobs are women, many of whom were not able to work from home. Those able to work from home often found themselves bearing the responsibilities of childcare, homeschooling, and even caring for dependent adults in families.

The Maryland Commission for Women conducted a study to examine how women in Maryland fared during the COVID-19 pandemic and the period when institutions began to re-open. More than 4,500 women responded to the Commission's survey between August and mid-October 2021, and 37 women participated in focus groups in October of that year. The characteristics of survey respondents did not reflect the women of the state; respondents tended to be better educated and their occupations and incomes reflected their generally higher education levels. Even among this more well-off group, serious concerns emerged.

Among the findings:

- 43% of the respondents reported delaying medical care during the pandemic.
- 65% experienced more anxiety or more frequent anxiety.
- 54% reported unwanted weight gain.
- More respondents reported losing their jobs than their spouses or partners.
- 27% reported not feeling safe returning to the workplace.
- 73% were concerned about being around unvaccinated people.
- 25% were concerned about their financial situation.
- More than half were unable to attend important family events.
- More than half are concerned their children have fallen behind in school.
- Half reported difficulty juggling children's care and schooling with the demands of their employment.
- 24% were concerned that their employers would not provide the flexibility needed to juggle their children's schedule and their own work demands.

The research also examined larger studies that focused on women of color, women of lower incomes, women with children and women in "essential jobs," who could not take leave or work from home. Many of the study findings laid bare situations impacting women long before the pandemic. The Commission for Women provides recommendations that address these situations.

Three of the 13 recommendations focus on the Commission's own outreach and 10 focus on steps public and private entities can take to ensure that women can balance work and family responsibilities in good times and in challenging times. Among these recommendations:

- Paid leave should be available, encompassing and flexible.
- Plans should be developed for the complex and conflicting needs of parents and workers for childcare in times of crisis.
- Childcare workers should be better compensated.
- Essential workers should be compensated for the health risks they endured to keep the rest of us safe and supplied during the crisis.
- Mental health needs of workers, parents and children should be addressed.

For the Commission's own work, the report recommends:

- Expand the MCW's reach by supporting the efforts of local Commissions for Women and, where Commissions for Women do not exist, encourage counties to develop one.
- Increase the MCW's involvement and education beyond its current initiatives to include initiatives that affect a more diverse audience.
- Empower current and future Commissioners to adequately amplify the voices of women and issues that impact them in their local jurisdictions.

The full report, **At the Heart of the Pandemic: Maryland Women and the COVID-19 Crisis,** is available on the Commission for Women's website at www.marylandwomen.org

LOOKING FORWARD

The Commission for Women held its annual planning meeting on June 16, 2022 at the beautiful Banneker-Douglass Museum of African American History and Culture in Annapolis. The purpose of this meeting was to set the Commission's agenda for the 2022-2023 program year.

The three out-going officers had all served two consecutive two-year terms and were not eligible for re-election. The Commission expressed its appreciation for their extraordinarily effective leadership over the past four years and it held elections for all three offices. The new Commission leadership heading into the coming program year will be in the hands of Tawanda Bailey, Chair, Maxine Griffin Somerville, First Vice Chair, and Roberta Pardo, Second Vice Chair.

(L-R) Roberta Pardo, Tawanda Bailey, Maxine Somerville

At this meeting, in addition to forming the two standing committees – the Achievement and Recognition Committee and the Policy and Legislation Committee – the Commissioners agreed to set as their third priority initiative: action on the recommendations stemming from its report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the women of Maryland, especially those recommendations that applied to the Commission itself – a focus on greater and more diverse outreach and connection to populations of women not traditionally reached or engaged by women's advocacy organizations, including women of low income, women living in rural areas or inner-city neighborhoods. This initiative will include continued work to encourage the establishment of Commissions for Women in the seven counties in the state where they do not now exist – Carroll, Caroline, Kent, Talbot, Queen Anne, Dorchester and Somerset Counties – and to strengthen the MCW's connections with the existing CFWs in the state.

"So many women, despite the insane challenges of the last 16 months, have found a way to make it work. They sacrificed their own health and well-being, their careers, their resources, etc. to care for others and find a way to keep their families afloat. . .What are we doing to ensure women can get back on their feet and NOT put themselves, their career, and their mental well-being on the back burner? What systems and structures will change to support women in the workplace so that we aren't struggling to make it all work...?"

Words of a survey respondent
Maryland Women and the COVID-19 Crisis

In Memoriam

Samantha Blizzard

The Maryland Commission for Women will always appreciate the support and guidance Samantha provided over the eight years that she served as the Commission's liaison to the Office of the Secretary. She was a good friend and generous leader whose light will not be forgotten, but instead treasured as we will forever remember her warmth, humor, wisdom, and most of all, her caring and dedication to those served by the Maryland Department of Human Services.

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