

**Commission for Women**  
**Meeting Minutes/Virtual**  
**November 13, 2025 / 7:00 p.m.**



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**Present**

Janet LaValle, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair  
Mital Gajjar, Member at Large  
Shuaa Tajammul, Secretary

Tiffany Boiman  
Michelle Buteau  
Georgia Coffey  
Jodi Danis  
Shannon Owens Harden  
Elizabeth Richards  
Lindsey Turnbull

**CFW Team Members**

Jodi Finkelstein, Executive Director  
Kelsea Sprague, Intern

**Guests**

Angela Mack  
Eyerusalem Sija Shehbala

**Absent**

Sheena Foster, Chair  
Betty Romero, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair

**GENERAL MEETING MINUTES**

**1. Welcome/Introductions/Cmr. LaValle**

- a. Angela Mack – volunteer for CFW
- b. Eyerusalem Sija Shehbala - 4th semester Nursing student from university  
Maryland School of Nursing

**2. Approval of Minutes and Agenda/Cmr. LaValle**

- a. Minutes: APPROVED as Amended (change to only virtual meeting, not in-person)
- b. Agenda: APPROVED as Amended (first report PALS, second SPRE)

**3. Executive Committee Report/Cmr. LaValle, Cmr. Richards, and E.D. Finkelstein**

- a. Met on 11/3 – reviewed PALS incentives

**Commission for Women**  
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**November 13, 2025 / 7:00 p.m.**



- b. Menstrual Product Equality and Access Act – EC moved to support bill.
    - i. VOTE to ratify the EC Vote to support starting as a pilot program in areas of need in the County: APPROVED
  - c. Chair's Networking Reception (WLB Breakfast): Need volunteers to help plan. Must RSVP to attend event on time to attend.
  - d. Dept. of Corrections jail visit new date: no update yet
  - e. CE Meeting with SPRE: November 18; Several Commissioners attending, Exec. Dir. Finkelstein sent update email to RSVP to attend.
  - f. Recent EmpowerHer self-defense class: attended by middle and high schoolers in the County.
4. **Executive Director's Report/ Executive Director Jodi Finkelstein**
- a. Interns doing a great job
  - b. Working on programs and CE meeting
5. **Committee Reports/Votes**
- a. PALS/Commissioner Richards:
    - i. Bill Recommendations:
      - 1. Maryland Caregiver Employment Protection Act: making sure that this becomes a protected category of persons
      - 2. Prescription Privacy Protection Act for Abortion Medication: looking to protect prescribers and patients
      - 3. Study Stipend to Caregivers: sponsored by Mont. Co. Commission on Aging (Cmr. Romero is on that Commission)
      - 4. Coerced Debt Bill: When abusers force the person they are victimizing into debt, i.e., taking out credit cards in their name, etc., and creditors end up going after the victim
      - 5. Stop Silencing Survivors Act: didn't pass in 2025, setting up extra protections for people so their abusers are not suing them for defamation (seen a lot in college campuses)

**Commission for Women**  
**Meeting Minutes/Virtual**  
**November 13, 2025 / 7:00 p.m.**



6. Family and Law Enforcement Protection Act: Did not pass in 2025. Montgomery County is very good and is the standard within MD, but not standardized across state - relinquishing firearms after PO in place. Hoping bill fills gaps around State.
  7. Timing of Hearing between TPO and FPO, and Relief for Financial Loss: expand time between TPO and FPO from 7 days to about 14 days to be more on par with rest of the nation
  8. Birth Certificate Modernization Act: makes it easier for individuals to change their birth certificate to match their gender, especially if it was not the gender assigned at birth
  9. Monica Cooper Pre-release: did not pass in 2025. Long been a priority for CFW, in-line with pre-release services championed by CFW. There is no women specific pre-release facility in Md., although meant to be built in 2023.
- ii. Assigned CFW Bill Champions: must prepare issue brief before 12/3 because Lobby Day in on 12/11 and Champions will present their brief to legislators in meeting, and during the Legislative Session will keep track of deadlines re: hearings and testimony (written testimony is preferred).
  - iii. VOTE: PALS recommends these 9 bills for legislative priorities for the CFW the 2026 General Assembly (ratify PALS committee approval):  
APPROVED
- b. SPRE/Cmr. Boiman, Cmr. Coffey, and Cmr. Tajammul
    - i. Review briefing of Strategic Plan to County Council President Stewart and Staff
    - ii. Adding slide to presentation to CE
      1. Review all slides, add legislative priorities
  - c. Programming and Planning/ Executive Director Jodi Finkelstein
    - i. Free self-defense class on Monday 11/17 in Gaithersburg: very popular

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- ii. Carmen Kaarid working on Women's History Month event with Ijeoma Enendu from Montgomery Women
  - 1. Press release went out today for nominations
- iii. Financial Health and Wellness Series went well, had around 80 people recently
- iv. Divorce Seminar is first Wednesday of every month, had 50 people in November
- v. Meeting with Council President Kate Stewart – idea for public seminar on peace and protective order process prior to going to an organization, and put together a one-page handout
  - 1. Cmr. Tajammul to help
- d. Budget/Executive Director Jodi Finkelstein
  - i. None
- e. Emerging Leaders/Cmr. Gajjar
  - i. Brainstorming ideas
- f. Public Relations/Cmr. Turnbull
  - i. Meet the Commissioners Surveys turned to social media posts
- g. WLB/Executive Director Jodi Finkelstein
  - i. WLB is Saturday, 1/31/2026. Will have Chair's networking reception, must RSVP by deadline
  - ii. All breakout sessions have been designated
  - iii. Need more sponsors
  - iv. Individual tickets will be available online soon, pricing has been determined
  - v. Potential lunch option for purchase

**6. Liaison Reports**

- a. MLAW/ Executive Director Jodi Finkelstein

**Commission for Women**  
**Meeting Minutes/Virtual**  
**November 13, 2025 / 7:00 p.m.**



- i. Conference had around 150 people in attendance, excellent speakers and information. Several commissioners attended.
- b. MD CFW/Executive Director Finkelstein
  - i. Roundtable for all Chairs after MLAW Conference
  - ii. Seeking feedback and offering assistance to improve and enhance communication
- c. HTPC/Executive Director Finkelstein
  - i. Meeting is on Wednesday 11/19 from 12:00pm to 1:30pm in 2<sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room of Rockville library. Guest speaker from Governor's office on collecting data around human trafficking and the dashboard created to do that
  - ii. Working on and doing trainings on HTP
    - 1. For bus operators
    - 2. For Poolesville High School
  - iii. PR campaign around differences of legitimate spa vs. one that may not be legitimate
- d. DVCC/Cmr. Tajammul
  - i. Presentation by Angel Campbell, the Senior Training Tech Specialist and Lab Coordinator at Md. Network Against DV regarding Stalking and the Misuse of Technology.
- e. CFW Scholarship/Cmr. LaValle
  - i. None
- f. Community Health Needs Adv. Committee/ Cmr. LaValle
  - i. Healthy Mont. Co. – Passing of HR1 re: Medicaid eligibility and renewal requirements over next several years, could affect up to 23,000 County residents
  - ii. Supporting residents during federal government shutdown
  - iii. Diabetes Awareness Month

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iv. Cold and Flu Season

v. Healthy Mont. Co. meets quarterly, next meeting virtual on November 18

g. Choose Respect/Cmr. Gajjar

i. Meetings underway for Spring event

**7. Ad Hoc Committees**

a. By-Laws/ Cmr. LaValle

i. None

**8. Old Business**

a. None

**9. New business/Announcements**

a. Next meeting in-person, social gathering for holidays

b. Kelsea Sprague – Graduate Intern introduction

**10. Adjourned**