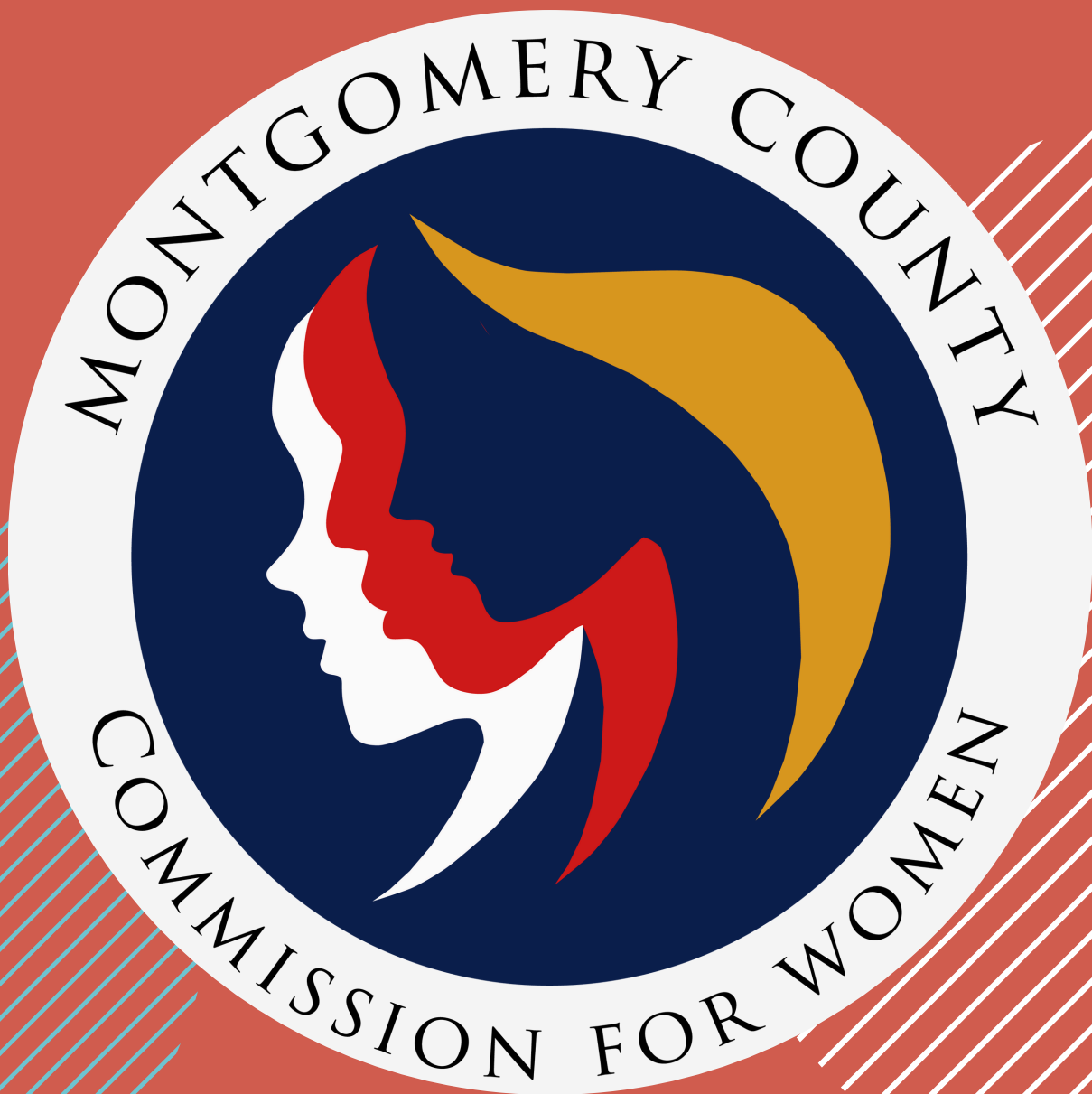


# MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

## ANNUAL REPORT

### JULY 2023 - JUNE 2024



ADVANCING WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY SINCE 1972

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# ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024

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## Commissioners:

Arlinda J. Clark, Esq., Chair  
Isabel Argoti, First Vice Chair  
Lindsey Turnbull, Second Vice-Chair  
Elizabeth (Liz) Richards, Secretary  
LaDonna King, At Large  
Ijeoma Enendu  
Betty Romero  
Janet LaValle  
Tondalayo Royster  
Jodi Danis  
Tonja G. Paylor  
Kathy Estrada  
Helene Meister (resigned February 2024)  
Mital Gajjar  
Sheena Foster  
Margaret Rajnic (resigned June 2024)

## Team Members:

**Executive Director:** Jodi Finkelstein, MSW

**Program Manager:** Carmen Kaarid, MSW

### Interns:

Liam Darnell, junior, Walt Whitman High School  
Sarah Jiatz, senior, Paint Branch High School  
Hannah Mullins, sophomore, Walt Whitman High School  
Lily Scheckner, junior, Montgomery Blair High School  
Diana Renderos, senior, Montgomery Blair High School



## Message From The Chair Arlinda J. Clark, Esq.

As a proud leader of this dedicated team of fifteen professionals that share a passion for improving the economic, social, health, and safety conditions of women in Montgomery County, it is with great pleasure that I share our achievements for Fiscal Year 2024 with you. In the annual report, you will see the Commission's commitment to women in Montgomery County through:

1. the Commission's FY24 strategic focus on women's economic and financial security;
2. the Commission's programming at the 44th Annual Women's Legislative Briefing that was focused on collaborating for equality and justice for women through topics focused on women's wealth; health and safety;
3. other Commission educational programming focused on advancing women's careers through career fairs and hosting informative sessions on topics that adversely affect the female population;
4. the Commission's steadfast involvement in supporting county and state legislative initiatives that focus on equal pay for women; menstrual product accessibility; reproductive health service access; promoting reimbursement for home care workers; redefining neglect as it relates to child abuse; defining consent as it relates to sex crimes; including child pornography as sexual solicitation of a minor; law enforcement and victim notification when a prohibited person attempts to purchase a firearm and fails the background check; re-entry services for women returning home from incarceration; and extending reproductive health protections for gender-affirming care;
5. hosting Lobby Day to demonstrate the Commission's commitment by advocating its position on Maryland Legislative initiatives.

The cornerstone of the Commission's efforts lies in working hand in hand with the community to bring about the change we aspire to achieve. I am truly delighted to have collaborated with many of you on the subjects highlighted in this annual report. As someone who firmly believes in the power of collective voices, I applaud you, the reader, for your commitment to improving the lives of women in Montgomery County. Remember, every great journey begins with a single step, and the Commission is honored to embark on that first step alongside you. I look forward to your continued support!

Please enjoy the FY24 Annual Report!





# Executive Director's Report

## Jodi Finkelstein, MSW

Since our founding in 1972, the Montgomery County Commission for Women has worked to make our communities safe and equitable environments for women and girls. This year, we have moved forward with that goal through several programs, seminars, and legislative projects which are highlighted throughout this review.

This past year we were pleased to hold our 44th Women Legislative Briefing in person for the first time in three years. Over 500 people gathered at the Universities at Shady Grove where we celebrated the theme, "From Proposal to Passage: Collaborating for Justice and Equality." The keynote panel included a wonderful "fireside chat" with Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks and Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater. Montgomery County Council Vice President Kate Stewart moderated the robust discussion. It was an exciting opportunity to hear from three female leaders in Maryland and learn about their unique experiences and perspective on issues affecting women and girls.

The Commission's legislative advocacy initiatives began with our virtual lobby day which was held on December 14, 2023. Delegate Emily Shetty served as the keynote speaker, and Commissioners were joined by numerous legislators to discuss 8 legislative priorities, including topics such as sexual assault prevention, women's healthcare, and wage transparency.

In addition to focusing on our programs and advocacy, the Commission continued to build our internship program. This past year, we were pleased to receive funding so that interns from high school, college, and graduate school programs were paid for their outstanding efforts. We are proud to host students throughout the year and continue to be a field placement of the University of Maryland School of Social Work.

I continue to be optimistic and excited as we continue to advocate for positive change in Montgomery County. I would like to thank our supporters and constituents for making all this vital and impactful work possible.

With this, I'm pleased to highlight the work of the Commission from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, in the following pages.

# Emerging Leaders Committee

**Co-Chairs:** Isabel Argoti and Lindsey Turnbull

This year, the Emerging Leaders Committee focused on two key initiatives: the 2024 Girl Power Contest and the Emerging Leaders Track at the Women's Legislative Briefing (WLB).

## Emerging Leaders and the Women's Legislative Briefing:

The Committee was pleased to once again offer Student Service-Learning (SSL) hours this year. Students who participated in the Emerging Leaders sessions and adhered to the established guidelines were eligible to earn up to three SSL hours. The program included two engaging seminars:

1. Next Steps: Planning for Your Future
2. Be Engaged: Your Community Toolkit

The Commission extends its sincere thanks to Patricia Prather for her dedicated leadership as Chair of the Emerging Leaders track.

We were also honored to welcome Sami Saeed, the 2023–2024 Student Member of the Board of Education, as the keynote speaker for the Emerging Leaders session at the WLB.

## 2024 Girl Power Contest

The seventh annual Girl Power Contest ran from March 1–31, in celebration of Women's History Month. Hosted in partnership with Montgomery County Public Libraries and Friends of the Library, Montgomery County, the contest encouraged creative responses to the following prompt:

*What business would you create in Montgomery County and what impact would it have on the girls and women in our community?*

A first-place winner and honorable mention were selected in each category. Winners were announced via a [press release](#) and social media in May 2024, and their entries can be viewed [here](#).

The winners were honored at a special celebration prior to the June Commission for Women meeting, where they received a certificate from the County Executive and a "swag bag" with items from the CFW, Montgomery County Public Libraries and Friends of the Library.

We were delighted to be joined in celebration by County Executive Marc Elrich and Councilmembers Marilyn Balcombe, Natali Fani-González, and Will Jawando. Photos from the event are available [here](#).







# 2024 Women's Legislative Briefing

**WLB Co-Chairs:** Isabel Argoti and Jodi Danis

**Committee Members:** Arlinda J. Clark, Esq., Betty Romero, Tonja Paylor, and members from the CFW's Community Sponsoring Organizations

The 44th Annual Women's Legislative Briefing (WLB) was held on Sunday, January 28, 2024, at The Universities at Shady Grove, marking the first in-person WLB since 2020. With the theme *From Proposal to Passage: Collaborating for Equality and Justice*, the event brought together more than 500 community members, elected officials, and advocates from across Maryland for a day of meaningful dialogue, learning, and engagement.

The keynote session featured a powerful fireside chat with Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater and Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks, moderated by Montgomery County Councilmember Kate Stewart. This inspiring conversation set the tone for the conference, emphasizing the critical role of women in leadership and how their unique journeys shape their advocacy for women and girls.

Attendees participated in two rounds of breakout sessions, offering a total of eight workshops covering topics such as safety, healthcare, technology, education, economic empowerment, and advocacy. Session titles included:

- Passage to Protection: Ensuring Women's Safety
- Collaborative Care: Navigating a Women's Well-Being
- Encoding Justice: Understanding Technology for Women's Equality
- Advocacy 101: Become an AdvocatHER
- Educating for Equality: Empowering Women through Education
- Building Wealth: Money Matters to Women.
- Proposals at the Desk: Shaping the Future of Women in the Workplace
- Advocacy 102: Advocacy in ACTION

Attendee feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many highlighting the event's strong organization, impactful content, and energizing atmosphere. Below are a few participants' comments from our evaluations.

“It's a great way to spend an afternoon with a diverse (age and race) group of women, make connections, learn about women's groups and legislation & issues to advocate for.”

“It is very impressive to see the many vibrant and effective organizations active in MoCo, also to hear about protective bills, panels were great, we really enjoyed the day with everyone!”

“It is the key event in the county for people interested in legislative issues and specifically women's issues in Maryland and across the country. We learn so much from the speakers and from the sponsors.”

# 2024 Women's Legislative Briefing

The day began with the Chair's Networking Breakfast at 10:00 a.m., where more than 60 leaders from sponsoring organizations came together to connect, exchange ideas, and explore new opportunities for collaboration. One of the key outcomes of the breakfast was the planning of a community event on fraud and scam prevention, which was successfully held in October 2024.

The success of the 2024 Women's Legislative Briefing was made possible thanks to the generous support of nearly 50 community sponsors, including Kaiser Permanente, AARP Maryland, and The Universities at Shady Grove.

## Thank You to Our 2024 WLB Corporate Sponsors

<p><b>Emerald Sponsors:</b></p>  <p><b>KAISER PERMANENTE®</b></p>	<p><b>Opal Sponsors:</b></p> 
<p><b>Pearl Sponsors:</b></p> 	<p><b>Topaz Sponsors:</b></p> 

## Thank You to Our 2024 WLB Community Co-Sponsors

AA MOVE (Asian Americans Mobilize, Organize, Vote & Empower)  
AAUW Kensington-Rockville  
AAUW Maryland  
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Theta Omega Omega Chapter  
Child Justice, Inc.  
Christol Hair  
Cindy Gibson  
Court Watch Montgomery  
FlanCake by Gaby  
Frederick County Alumnae Chapter  
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.  
Frederick County Commission for Women  
Freedom in Reproduction Maryland  
HHELP>Helping Hands Empowering & Lifting People  
Hon. Pete Fosselman

Isabel Argoti  
Ivy Vine Charities, Incorporated  
League of Women Voters of Montgomery County, MD  
Lincoln Park Historical Foundation  
Maryland Business & Professional Women  
The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Inc. (MCASA)  
Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW)  
Mission 50  
Moms Demand Action  
Montgomery County Business and Professional Women (MC BPW)  
Montgomery County Women's Bar Association  
Montgomery County Young Democrats

Montgomery County, MD, Chapter, National Organization for Women  
Montgomery Women  
The National Association of University Women, College Alumnae Club  
National Council for Negro Women  
Montgomery County Maryland Section  
Office of Congressman David Trone  
Rank the Vote  
Renters Alliance  
The Woman's Club of Bethesda  
Women Business Owners - Montgomery County  
The Women's Law Center of Maryland  
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Tau Delta Zeta Chapter



## SCENES FROM THE 2024 WLB



## Policy and Legislative Committee (PALS)

**Chair:** Tondalayo Royster

**Committee Members:** Helene Meister, Betty Romero, Liz Richards, Janet LaValle, and Isabel Argoti

The Policy and Legislative Committee continued its robust advocacy efforts by hosting the sixth annual Lobby Day for current and former Commissioners on December 14, 2023. The event was held virtually via Zoom and featured a dynamic lineup of state legislators.

Delegate Emily Shetty (D-18) delivered an inspiring keynote address to open the event. Commissioners also had the opportunity to engage with several other elected officials, including Delegate David Moon (D-20), Delegate Anne Kaiser (D-14), Delegate Lorig Charkoudian (D-20), Delegate Lily Qi (D-15), Senator Jeff Waldstreicher (D-18), and Senator Ariana Kelly (D-16), who generously shared their time and insights on key policy issues impacting women and families.

Members of the Committee each selected a bill to champion, making them responsible for drafting and submitting testimony during the General Assembly session and presenting background information on their bill during Lobby Day.

Below are the Commission's priority bills for the 2024 Maryland General Assembly session, including links to the legislation and the name of the Commissioner who served as its champion.

Six Commission for Women priority bills passed this session:

- [HB496/SB758](#): Criminal Law – Sexual Crimes – Definition of Consent and Repeal of Force (**Champion: Tondalyao Royster**)
- [HB99/SB113](#): Criminal Law – Sexual Solicitation of a Minor Through Child Pornography – Prohibition (**Champion: Helene Meister**)
- [HB189/SB371](#): Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Personal Care Aides – Wage Reports (**Champion: Jodi Danis**)
- [HB649/SB525](#): Labor and Employment – Equal Pay for Equal Work – Wage Range Transparency (**Champion: Isabel Argoti**)
- [HB691/SB119](#): Legally Protected Health Care – Gender-Affirming Treatment (**Champion: Liz Richards**)
- [HB367/SB527](#): Community Colleges – Contraception – Access Requirements (**Champion: Liz Richards**)

Two CFW priority bills did not pass during the session:

- [HB37](#): Services for Formerly Incarcerated Women – Commission and Pilot Program – Establishment (**Champion: Kimberly Mouzon**)
- [HB869/SB753](#): Public Safety – Firearm Background Checks, Victim Notification, and the Maryland State Police Gun Center (**Champion: Isabel Argoti**)



# Policy and Legislative Committee (PALS)

## 2024 MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### 6 CFW PRIORITY BILLS PASSED

1

#### **HB496/SB758: CRIMINAL LAW - SEXUAL CRIMES - DEFINITION OF CONSENT AND REPEAL OF FORCE**

The purpose of the bill is to focus on consent as the starting point to determine if a sexual crime has occurred and clearly define consent. It will clearly define what consent entails and what it does not.

2

#### **HB99/SB113: CRIMINAL LAW - SEXUAL SOLICITATION OF A MINOR THROUGH CHILD PORNOGRAPHY - PROHIBITION**

Prohibiting an individual from knowingly and with a certain intent soliciting a minor or law enforcement officer posing as a minor to engage in certain prohibited sexual acts with the minor by a certain means.

3

#### **HB189/SB371: MARYLAND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM - PERSONAL CARE AIDES - WAGE REPORTS**

This bill ensures that home care workers employed with residential service agencies that receive Medicaid reimbursements will be entitled to key employment benefits.



4

#### **HB649/SB525: LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT - EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK - WAGE RANGE TRANSPARENCY**

This bill creates wage transparency by requiring employers to include pay ranges and a general description of benefits and other compensation in job postings.

5

#### **HB691/SB119: LEGALLY PROTECTED HEALTH CARE - GENDER-AFFIRMING TREATMENT**

This bill codifies Governor Wes Moore's executive order that legally protects individuals who participate in gender-affirming care.

6

#### **HB367/SB527: COMMUNITY COLLEGES - CONTRACEPTION - ACCESS REQUIREMENTS**

This bill requires two-year colleges and institutions (e.g., community colleges) to ensure student access to emergency contraceptives.

### 2 CFW PRIORITY BILLS DID NOT PASS

1

#### **HB37: BRIDGES TO REENTRY, PLANNING, TRAINING, NAVIGATION SERVICES FOR WOMEN**

This bill creates effective programming for women transitioning from prison to the community.

2

#### **HB869/SB753: FIREARM BACKGROUND CHECK DENIAL - LAW ENFORCEMENT AND VICTIM NOTIFICATION**

This bill establishes a requirement and process for law enforcement and victim notification when a person fails a background check.

In addition to supporting state bills, the Commission provided testimony on Montgomery County Council [Bill-42-23](#), the Menstrual Products Access and Equity Act. The bill required that free sanitary supplies be provided in all female public-facing bathrooms in the county. While the Commission supported the general concept, concerns were relayed about the cost to small businesses. The bill was reviewed in committee but did not advance to a full Council vote.



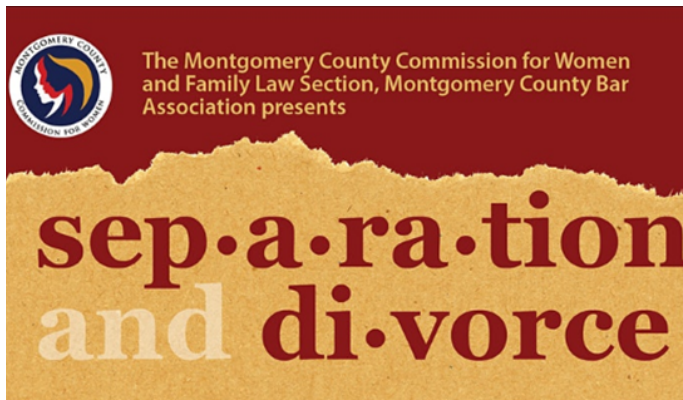
# Programming Committee

**Chair:** Ijeoma Enendu

**Members:** Isabel Argoti, Janet LaValle, Tonja Paylor

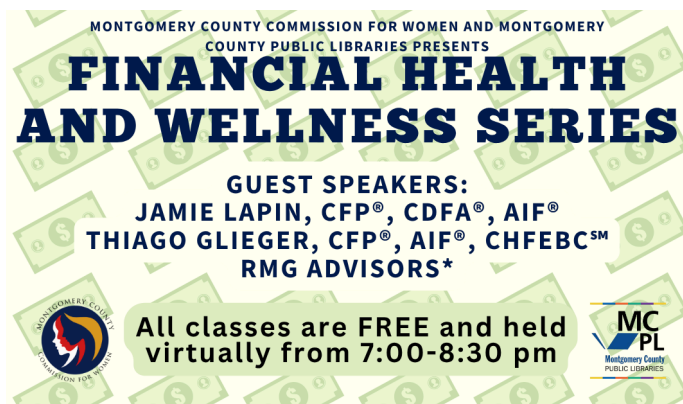
The Programming Committee worked diligently this fiscal year to host nearly 30 programs aimed at supporting and empowering women in Montgomery County. These programs play a vital role in providing essential support services and educational opportunities that help improve the status of women across the community. Each year, our programs are carefully evaluated to ensure they are responsive to the evolving needs of the women we serve and are accessible—regardless of where participants live in the county. This year, we were able to serve nearly 1,000 residents through our programs.

## FY24 Programs



### Separation and Divorce: What Do I Need to Know?

The Commission once again partnered with the Montgomery County Bar Association, Family Law Section, to provide free seminars on the "ins" and "outs" of going through a separation and divorce in Maryland. Participants learned about Methods of Dispute Resolution, When and Where to File, Types of Divorce and Grounds, Financial Statements, Alimony, Property and Equitable Distribution, Role of the Attorney, and Domestic Violence/Orders of Protection. From October through June, seminars were held on the first Wednesday of every month from 7 to 8:30 p.m., and they were free and offered virtually through Zoom.



### Financial Health & Wellness Series:

The Commission for Women partnered with Montgomery County Public Libraries to offer a virtual seminar series focused on the fundamentals of personal finance. Led by Jamie Lapin, owner of Risk Management Group, LLC, the series covered key topics including Financial Planning 101, Planning for Retirement, Social Security and Medicare, and Divorce and Money. Offered throughout the year, all sessions were free and open to the public, helping participants navigate the complexities of money management at every stage of life.



## FALL 2023 INTRODUCTORY SELF-DEFENSE SEMINAR



### Introductory Self-Defense Seminar

This two-hour "sampler" session provided teen and adult women of all fitness levels with practical tools to help reduce their risk of violence. Taught by Rape Aggression Defense (R.A.D.)-certified instructors, the program combined education on situational awareness with an introduction to basic physical self-defense techniques. Held in person at various Montgomery County Recreation Centers throughout the year, the sessions aimed to empower participants with greater confidence and personal safety skills.



## A VIRTUAL CAREER EXPLORATION *for her*

### A Virtual Career Exploration for Her

Hosted in partnership with Montgomery Women, this free virtual career guidance event was designed for middle and high school female students interested in exploring non-traditional career paths for women. Participants had the opportunity to engage directly with women working in fields where women are typically underrepresented. These professionals shared personal stories, career insights, and practical advice to inspire and inform the next generation of leaders. The event was held on Zoom and offered 2 Student Service Learning (SSL) hours to all student participants.

## Women's Sexual Health & Wellness

Make sex health a priority

Register here:  
<https://bit.ly/3QFsBdp>



### Women's Sexual Health & Wellness: From Menstruation to Menopause

This free, virtual seminar was designed to empower participants to engage in open, informed conversations about sexual health across the lifespan—from menstruation to menopause. The session addressed both the physical and emotional changes that occur with aging and emphasized the importance of healthy communication, informed healthcare decisions, and mental well-being. Held via Zoom, the seminar featured expert presentations by Dr. Jennifer W. Lin, M.D., and Dr. Kathryn Dumas, M.D., who offered valuable guidance and answered participant questions on these important topics.

## 2024 Career Series

All classes are **FREE** and will be held virtually from 7:00-8:30 PM

April 29	Interviewing Skills
May 6	Elevator Pitch & Networking
May 13	Resume Writing
May 20	Entrepreneurship: Building Your Brand
June 3	Wage Negotiation



Register for  
**FREE** here:  
<https://bit.ly/4anyvZa>



Questions? Email [cfwinfo@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:cfwinfo@montgomerycountymd.gov)

### Virtual Career Series

This fiscal year, we relaunched our popular five-part Career Series to support individuals in building confidence, sharpening their professional skills, and taking meaningful steps toward career success. The free, virtual seminars were open to all and designed to be accessible to job seekers at any stage—whether re-entering the workforce, navigating a career change, or seeking advancement in their current field. Seminar topics included interviewing skills, resume writing, wage negotiation, networking, and entrepreneurship, each session offering practical strategies and expert guidance. Held via Zoom, the series saw strong engagement, with nearly 400 participants registering and many attending multiple sessions.

## Public Relations Committee

**Chair:** Isabel Argoti

**Members:** Arlinda Clark, Kimberly Mouzon, Betty Romero, Lindsey Turnbull, and LaDonna King

Public Relations Committee members are responsible for providing guidance on the promotion of CFW programs and events. The committee continued to publicize Commission for Women events, programs, and overall activities of the Commission on social media, this includes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and our weekly newsletter. The CFW weekly newsletter is sent every Friday afternoon and reached 20,000 people.

The committee also had the opportunity to participate in several community events where Commissioners tabled and promoted the work and programs of the Commission directly to community members.

In addition, the Commission was honored with several proclamations from the County Executive and the County Council in recognition of our various causes and priorities.



(From left to right): Commissioners Tondalayo Royster and Isabel Argoti at the International Women's Day Proclamation at the Montgomery County Council.



Commissioner Tondalayo Royster at the Teen Dating Violence Prevention Month proclamation at the Montgomery County Council.



## Public Relations Committee



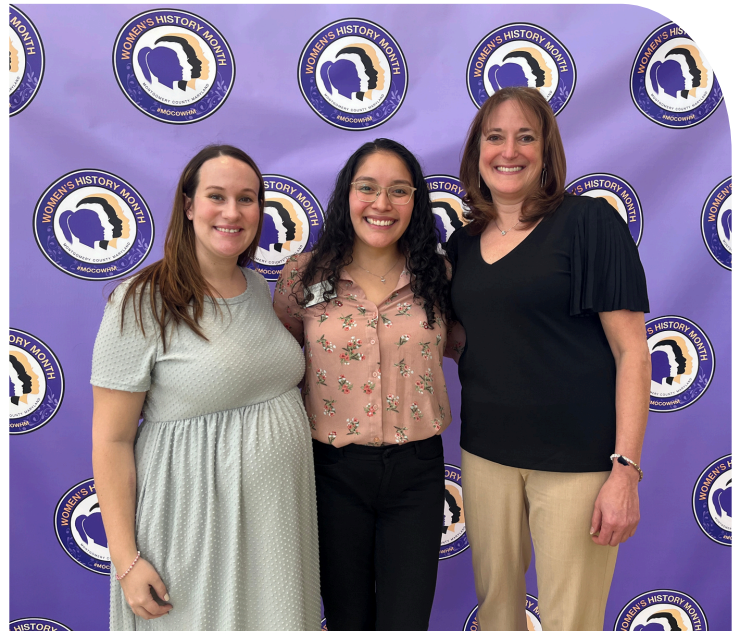
(From left to right): Commissioners Isabel Argoti, Ijeoma Enendu, Kathy Estrada, and Program Manager Carmen Kaarid at the MCPS Back-to-School Fair



(From left to right): Program Manager Carmen Kaarid, Executive Director Jodi Finkelstein, and CFW Summer RISE student Diana Renderos at the Summer RISE Closing Ceremony



(From left to right): Commissioners Ijeoma Enendu, Donna Rojas, County Executive Marc Elrich, and Commissioner Jodi Danis at National Night Out



(From left to right): Program Manager Carmen Kaarid, Commissioner Isabel Argoti, and Executive Director Jodi Finkelstein at a Women's History Month Celebration, hosted by the historic female majority Montgomery County Council

# Strategic Planning, Research, and Evaluation Committee (SPRE)

**Chair:** Betty Romero

**Members:** Tondalayo Royster, Isabel Argoti, Lindsey Turnbull, Arlinda Clark, Liz Richards, Jodi Danis and LaDonna King

The committee continually worked to ensure that the Commission highlighted priorities for the year and stayed in alignment with the strategic plan.

On September 9, 2023, SPRE hosted a strategic planning meeting that was open to all Commissioners. Goals for the Commissioners to complete during the year included:

- Creating a 30 second elevator pitch to be used as community events
- Identifying current gaps in representation on the Commission
- Ensuring that the "pulse" of the community was recognized while at community events.

During the meeting, participants also reviewed the self-assessment survey which was issued in July 2023. The purpose of the survey was to:

- Gain wisdom by understanding the commissioners' grasp of SPRE's work.
- Know the team's strengths and weaknesses and be inclusive.
- Create a consented, collaborative, and happy space for commissioners to pursue the priorities.





# Liaison Accomplishments

## Respectfest

**Liaison:** Tondalayo Royster

## RespectFEST

RespectFest is a virtual and in-person festival for youth aimed at raising awareness to reduce the rates of teen dating violence and provide education on healthy relationships and consent.

Commissioner Tondalayo Royster served on the Respectfest Planning Committee.

RespectFest took place virtually from April 1st – April 14th and in person on April 7th. During the two weeks of virtual events, middle school, and high school students could attend workshops via Zoom on how to have a healthy relationship, consent, and bystander intervention. In addition, students could also engage in the content on their own time with various online activities that addressed how to help a friend, healthy and unhealthy relationships, warning signs, types of abuse, dating violence, technology abuse, and a scenarios quiz. Students were also able to learn about different topics through the daily social media posts on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.

On April 7th, the in-person festival was held at the Wheaton Community Recreation Center. Over 350 participants attended. There were educational learning booths with activities addressing dating violence, how to help a friend, consent, bullying, financial abuse, technology abuse and how to talk to your child, in addition to yoga classes.



## Montgomery College Scholarship

**Liaison:** Isabel Argoti



The Commission, in conjunction with the Montgomery College Foundation established a STEM Scholarship to support students pursuing careers in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. The \$10,500 endowment, funded by individual gifts, will support current Montgomery College students now and in the future. In fall 2023, Yanet Berhanu received funds through the scholarship. The impact of this scholarship can best be described by Yanet:

**"I am originally from Ethiopia. I was born and raised in Addis Ababa till I turned 18. So far, I've had an amazing experience at MC. I am always so grateful for all the opportunities it exposes me to. Being acknowledged boosts my confidence and makes me feel like I am capable of doing all I want."**

## Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women

**Liaison:** Helene Mesiter and Sheena Foster

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

MLAW is a membership organization that is open to all and meets between 8 and 12 times a year.



Commissioners Meister and Foster:

- Organized, assisted, and attended the annual MLAW fall conference and the annual Legislative Reception and Briefing.
- Encouraged others to attend the events
- Either sponsored or solicited sponsors for MLAW events
- Represented the CFW on the MLW board and with other advocacy groups

## Human Trafficking Prevention Committee

**Liaison:** Kathy Estrada

In 2014, County Executive Ike Leggett created the Montgomery County Human Trafficking Task Force. The purpose of the task force is to increase understanding of the issue in Montgomery County and to develop interagency coordination of strategies for response and prevention.

In October 2017, the task force transitioned into the Montgomery County Human Trafficking Prevention Committee (Committee) via 27-17 Human Rights and Civil Liberties—Human Trafficking Prevention Committee Established.



Committee meetings occur 6 times a year and are open to the public.

Commissioner Estrada attended the meetings in FY2024 and was integral in ensuring the Commission stayed informed. In FY 2024, the Committee:

- Received 8 requests for training, with approximately 390 people trained about human trafficking 101
- Created and implemented a human trafficking prevention campaign that included the creation of posters and signage, including ads for buses, that were seen throughout the county
- Participated in the County's Human Trafficking Awareness Month Proclamation in January 2024

## Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

**Liaison:** Tondalayo Royster

The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) was established by the Montgomery County Council in 2006 with the mission of reducing the incidence of domestic violence and creating a safe community for families to live free of abuse.

The nineteen-member board is comprised of six public members, two representatives from non-governmental or non-profit domestic violence service or advocacy organizations and eleven agency representatives of the County and State government who coordinate efforts relating to domestic violence prevention and safety. The DVCC meets virtually bi-monthly on the second Thursday of the month from 5pm–7pm. Meetings are open for public observation.

Accomplishments included:

- The Victim Services Committee collaborated with the Safe Start Program by Chesapeake Counseling to offer free summer camp via Zoom from July–August;
- The Education and Outreach Committee presented the Choose Respect Montgomery Dating Violence Prevention workshop, "Expect Respect," to over 7,000 youth in 18 Montgomery County Public Schools and private schools;
- The Education and Outreach Committee coordinated the 15th Annual Choose Respect Montgomery Video Contest and received 227 entries;
- The Education and Outreach Committee coordinated RespectFest, the annual Choose Respect event, virtually and in person where over 1,000 people engaged in content and activities;
- The Education and Outreach Committee distributed over 9,900 Family Violence Awareness Cards and Multi-Language Cards throughout the County;
- The Education and Outreach Committee recognized Domestic Violence Awareness Month with the campaign, "Know the Signs."

More information about the DVCC may be found in their [annual report](#).