

# MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

## ANNUAL REPORT

### JULY 1, 2024 – JUNE 30, 2025



ADVANCING WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY SINCE 1972

21 MARYLAND AVENUE, SUITE 330 • ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND, 20850  
240-777-8300 • [WWW.MONTGOMERYCOUNTYMD.GOV/CFW](http://WWW.MONTGOMERYCOUNTYMD.GOV/CFW)

# ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CFW 2024-2025 Roster	3
Chair’s Message	4
Report of the Executive Director	5
Emerging Leaders and Girl Power	6
2025 Women’s Legislative Briefing	8
Policy and Legislation (PAL)	12
Programming	16
Public Relations	18
Strategic Planning, Research, and Evaluation	20
Liaison Accomplishments	21

## Commissioners:

Arlinda J. Clark, Esq., Chair  
Betty Romero, First Vice-Chair  
Sheena Foster, Second Vice-Chair  
Elizabeth (Liz) Richards, Secretary  
Lindsey Turnbull  
LaDonna King  
Ijeoma Enendu  
Janet LaValle  
Tondalayo Royster (resigned November 2024)  
Jodi Danis  
Tonja G. Paylor  
Kathy Estrada  
Mital Gajjar  
Shuaa Tajammul  
Michelle Buteau  
Georgia Coffey

## Team Members:

**Executive Director:** Jodi Finkelstein, MSW  
**Program Manager:** Carmen Kaarid, MSW

### Interns:

Olivia Suh, Junior, Poolesville High School  
Liam Darnell, Senior, Walt Whitman High School  
Carmen Jenkins, MSW Student, Howard University  
Ayza Sidiqqi, Junior, Clarksburg High School  
Ansuya Bisbey, Junior, Richard Montgomery High School



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

Dear Montgomery County Commission for Women Community:

As Chair of the Montgomery County Commission for Women, I am delighted to share the FY2025 annual report that reflects a year of resilience, progress, and strategic pivot made possible by the commitment of passionate individuals such as yourself. The Commission's strategic focus for FY25 was "Women in Leadership, Education, and Workforce".

With Montgomery County leadership and community support, the Commission for Women implemented various community initiatives including:

1. The 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Women's Legislative Briefing highlighting topics focused on the theme Empow(HER): Breaking Barriers to Success.
2. A community collaborative panel discussion Navigating Fraud, Scams, and AI Risks focused on identifying fraud, scam and AI risk factors; victim prevention; and victim solutions.
3. Educational and resource-oriented programming encompassing separation and divorce information, financial health and wellness series, and career series.
4. Emerging Leaders youth involvement and programming.
5. Legislative initiatives supporting bills that enhance the female community embodying sexual assault prevention, healthcare access, and re-entry support for formerly incarcerated women. You will also read about the re-entry program initiated within the Office of the Commission for Women.

Various other community initiatives included scholarship, domestic violence, human trafficking, celebrating women making history in Montgomery County, among others.

Looking to the future the goals remain clear – economic and financial security; women in politics and leadership; and women's health, safety and education equity. Every day is a reminder of just how much work there is to do to enhance the lives and level the playing field for women in Montgomery County in an ever-present emerging environment. The Commission for Women looks forward to your continued partnership.

Thank you, Montgomery County Executive, Montgomery County Council, and our esteemed community for your continued support to achieve even greater impact throughout Montgomery County. One suggestion, one hand, one word of support may mean life or death to many women and associated families in our county. Thank you for being that beacon of light and may your light forever shine in Montgomery County, Maryland! Now sit back, relax and enjoy the annual report to see the fruits of our collaborative labor.

With gratitude,

Arlinda J. Clark, Esq.  
Chair, Commission for Women  
Montgomery County



# Executive Director's Report Jodi Finkelstein, MSW

I am pleased to present the accomplishments of the Montgomery County Commission for Women from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025.

Since our founding in 1972, the Commission has remained dedicated to creating safe, equitable communities for women and girls across Montgomery County. Over the past year, we've advanced this mission through a range of impactful programs, seminars, and legislative initiatives, many of which are detailed in the pages that follow.

One of the year's signature events was our 45th annual Women's Legislative Briefing, which welcomed more than 500 attendees to the Universities at Shady Grove. The event embraced the inspiring theme, *"Breaking Barriers: Women Who Inspire and Innovate,"* and featured a dynamic keynote panel of trailblazing women. The Honorable Brooke Lierman, Maryland Comptroller; Dr. Karyn N. Onyeneho, Founder of Color of Genes; and Margarita Womack, Founder and CEO of Latin Goodness Foods, each shared their powerful journeys of leadership and innovation. The discussion was skillfully moderated by Jordan Lindsay, Public Information Officer for the Montgomery County Council, and provided a unique opportunity to learn from women leading change in business, science, and public service.

Our legislative advocacy efforts began with a virtual Lobby Day on December 12, 2024. We were honored to welcome Congressmember-elect Sarah K. Elfreth, who shared insights from her congressional campaign and offered valuable strategies for effective advocacy at both local and national levels.

During the legislative session, the Commission supported six priority bills focused on sexual assault prevention, healthcare access, and support for formerly incarcerated women. We are proud that three of these important bills were successfully passed into law.

In addition to our advocacy work, the Commission continued to offer a variety of free public programs. These included seminars on separation and divorce, financial literacy and wellness, and a youth-focused career series—each designed to equip community members with vital information and tools for success.

March 2025 was an especially active month, as we celebrated Women's History Month with several events, including our annual Girl Power Contest and the Women Making History Celebration, both of which highlighted the creativity, resilience, and leadership of women and girls in our community.

Our work is made possible not only by our dedicated Commissioners, but also by the passionate interns who contribute their time and talents throughout the year. We were proud to host students from high schools, colleges, and graduate programs across the region, and we were especially pleased to serve as a field placement site for Howard University's School of Social Work.

As we look ahead, I remain deeply optimistic and energized by the progress we've made—and the work still to come. On behalf of the Commission, I thank our supporters, partners, and community members for helping us drive meaningful, lasting change in Montgomery County. With that, I invite you to explore the highlights of our work from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, in the following pages.

# Emerging Leaders Committee and Girl Power Contest

**Committee Chair:** Lindsey Turnbull

**Emerging Leaders (EL) Women’s Legislative Briefing Chair:** Patricia Prather

The Emerging Leaders Committee is responsible for creating and implementing programming for students. The committee primarily focuses on two core initiatives: the Emerging Leaders track at the Women’s Legislative Briefing (WLB) and the annual Girl Power Contest.

The Emerging Leaders track was designed to engage students in grades 6–12, helping them build leadership and advocacy skills. This year, approximately 50 students participated in sessions on Understanding Impact: Government, Legislation, and Advocacy 101 and Trailblazers in Politics: Inspiring Journeys, Powerful Words, and Your Path to Leadership.

The panels featured several distinguished speakers, including Montgomery County Councilmember Laurie–Anne Sayles, Delegate Lesley Lopez (D–39), and Congressmember April McClain Delaney.

This year’s Emerging Leaders speaker was Ayza Siddiqi, a Commission for Women intern and junior at Clarksburg High School.

The Commission sincerely thanks Patricia Prather for chairing the WLB Emerging Leaders Committee and for organizing one of the best Emerging Leaders tracks in the program’s history.



**EMERGING LEADERS SPEAKER AND CFW INTERN ADAYZA SIDDIQI**

In celebration of Women’s History Month, the Girl Power Contest ran March 1 – April 11. Nearly 50 entries were received and answered the question, “What kind of media (TV shows, social media content, YouTube series, movies, books, etc.) would you create to inspire, uplift, and empower girls and women in the community?”

The award winners were celebrated during an intimate ceremony on Thursday, June 12. Montgomery County Council President Kate Stewart joined County Executive Marc Elrich to congratulate the winners.



**COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARCH ELRICH AND MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL PRESIDENT KATE STEWART CONGRATULATING GIRL POWER CONTEST WINNERS**

# 2025 Girl Power Contest Winners

## Elementary School

**First Place:**  
Victoria Lever



Victoria is 11 years old and in 5th grade at Ashburton Elementary, where she enjoys writing and music. She runs track, loves to read (especially Harry Potter), and is obsessed with chocolate. She's a proud nerd who enjoys being weird and doing spontaneous things.

**Honorable Mention:**  
Alexandra Eum



Alexandra Eum is a third-grade Chinese Immersion student at Bayard Rustin Elementary School. She enjoys reading books authored by Lyla Lee and Roald Dahl, writing, and learning new languages. In her free time, Alexandra plays tennis on a traveling team and also practices ballet and chess.



## Middle School

**First Place:**  
Federica Albanese



Federica Albanese is an eighth grader at Loiederman Middle School. She has always been passionate about the performing arts because they are a powerful way to express my emotions and creativity, explore new ideas, inspire, and connect with others. She enjoys creating content that is both entertaining and thought-provoking. Her goal is to use her passion for the performing arts to make a positive difference in people's lives.

**Honorable Mention:**  
Sarah Liu



Sarah is a 6th grader enrolled in the Humanities and Communications magnet program at Eastern Middle School. She loves writing, spending time with her friends, creating art, and helping others whenever she can.



## High School

**First Place:**  
Ansuya Bisbey



Ansuya Bisbey is a rising senior at Richard Montgomery High School. She is a youth advocate passionate about human rights and has led initiatives through her school's food security committee, the Young Feminist Party Maryland, and interned with local government.

**Honorable Mention:**  
Isabella Harry



Isabelle Amarachi Harry is a junior at The Field School with a passion for science, healthcare, and creative problem-solving. She's especially drawn to the intersection of biology and engineering, using hands-on projects—from building prototypes to researching chronic health conditions—to explore how innovation can improve lives.



## Adult

**First Place:**  
Natalie Jean



Natalie Jean is an award-winning, multi-genre independent singer-songwriter known for creating powerful, socially conscious music. With over a decade of experience, she has received numerous accolades for her work addressing women's rights, mental health, and equality. As the founder of Natalie Jean Music, she blends artistry with advocacy and is passionate about mentoring emerging songwriters to help them find their voice and purpose through music.

**Honorable Mention:**  
Arwa ElBoraei



Arwa Khedr ElBoraei is an accomplished author and visual artist whose creative work centers on themes of self-discovery, emotional resilience, and human connection. Her storytelling and visual expressions are deeply rooted in personal reflection, cultural insight, and a belief in the transformative power of art.



# 2025 Women's Legislative Briefing

**WLB Co-Chairs:** Betty Romero and Janet LaValle

The 45th Women's Legislative Briefing was held on Saturday, January 25, 2025, at the Universities of Shady Grove with over 500 people in attendance. The theme was, "Empow(HER): Breaking Barriers to Success."

Nearly 100 sponsors attended the Chair's Networking Breakfast, which was coordinated and hosted by Commission for Women Chair Arlinda J. Clark, Esq.

The keynote panel was moderated by Jordan Lindsay, Public Information Office, Montgomery County Council and included:

- Honorable Brooke Lierman, Comptroller, State of Maryland
- Dr. Karyn N. Onyeneho, Founder, Color of Genes
- Margarita Womack, Founder & CEO, Latin Goodness Foods

Breakout sessions covered the following:

- Her Health, Her Journey: Navigating Reproductive Health Across Life Stages
- Economic Justice for Women: Navigating Financial Challenges
- Weathering the Storm: The Intersection of Environmental Challenges and Women's Well-being
- Breaking the Silence: Protection Women from Violence and Exploitation
- Advancing Women's Health: Reproductive Wellness and Beyond
- Empowering Women, Strengthening Economies: Advancing Pathways to Economic Justice
- Ending Violence Against Women: Solutions for Safety and Justice
- Tackling Climate Change: Solutions for a Sustainable Future

Students in grades 6-12 were able to participate in the Emerging Leaders track, which was held concurrently with the briefing.



**SCENES FROM THE CHAIR'S BREAKFAST**

# 2025 Women's Legislative Briefing

The WLB would not have been possible without our large sponsors. Thank you!

## Thank You to Our 2025 WLB Sponsors

**Amethyst Sponsor:**



**MedStar Health**

**Topaz Sponsor:**



**Pearl Sponsors:**



**Opal Sponsors:**



**Prince George's County Commission for Women**

**The Hon. Pete Fosselman**

# 2025 Women's Legislative Briefing

The WLB would not have been possible without our community co-sponsors. Thank you!

## **Thank You to Our 2025 Community Co-Sponsors**

### **Level 4 Community Co-Sponsors**

AAUW Maryland  
Healing and Deliverance Ministry, Inc.  
Montgomery County Education Association  
Montgomery County MD National Council for Negro Women, Inc.  
Montgomery Women  
Renters Alliance  
Silver Spring (MD) Chapter of the Links, Incorporated

### **Level 3 Community Co-Sponsors/Friend of the WLB**

Aavaneer	Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. *Theta Omega Omega Chapter	Maryland Commission for Women
Flanck Foundation	Maryland District 15 Democratic Caucus
From Here to Home Essentials	Maryland NOW
Ivy Vine Charities, Inc.	Montgomery County Maryland, NOW
Largo MD Financial Center with The National Campaign for Financial Literacy	Montgomery County Public Libraries
League of Women Voters of Montgomery County Maryland	Montgomery County Young Democrats
Marland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW)	Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated, Eta Pi Zeta Chapter
	Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. - Tau Delta Zeta Chapter

### **Level 2 Community Co-Sponsors**

AAUW Kensington-Rockville (MD) Branch	Montgomery County Business and Professional Women (MC BPW)
Business and Professional Women of Maryland (BPW/MD)	Montgomery County MD NAACP Youth Council
Court Watch Montgomery	Rainwater Growth   Training, Research, & Consulting
Empowering Latinx Warriors DMV Pintando Sonrisas	Socially Polished
Frederick County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.	The National Association of University Women, Inc. College Alumnae Club
Frederick County Commission for Women	The World's Corner
Lincoln Park Historical Foundation	Women's Law Center of Maryland
Mission 50	Yellow Rose Foundation, Inc.

### **Level 1 Community Co-Sponsors**

Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee (Democratic Party)  
Proud Pearls of Prince George's, An Official Interest Group of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated \*  
SustainaBuilders Group, LLC  
Wendy J Frosh

# 2025 Women's Legislative Briefing



## Policy and Legislative Committee (PALS)

**Chair:** Tondalayo Royster (resigned November 2024) and Liz Richards

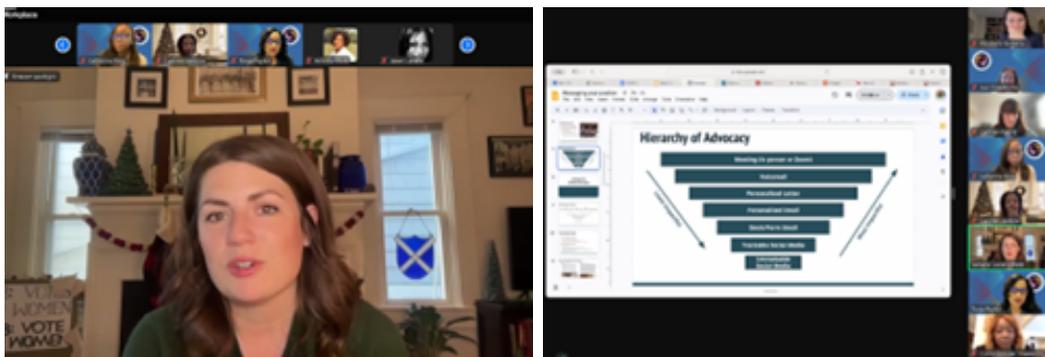
On November 23, Commissioners Liz Richards and Sheena Foster attended the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women's (MLAW) annual conference, which highlights key legislation impacting women and families. The information shared at the conference helps to inform the Commission's legislative priorities for the upcoming year.

Following the conference, the Commission's Legislative and Public Policy Committee reviewed and recommended a list of priority bills, which were then approved by the full Commission. These priorities were shared with Montgomery County legislators during a virtual Lobby Day held on December 12, 2024.

The event featured Congressman-elect Sarah K. Elfreth as the keynote speaker, who offered insights from her congressional campaign and shared effective strategies for advocacy at both the local and national levels.



**COMMISSIONERS LIZ RICHARDS AND SHEENA FOSTER AT MLAW CONFERENCE**



**SCENES FROM VIRTUAL LOBBY DAY**

## Policy and Legislative Committee (PALS)

Throughout the 2025 legislative session, the Commission actively supported six priority bills focused on sexual assault prevention, healthcare access, and reentry support for formerly incarcerated women. These bills included:

- **S.B.0549/H.B.0629 - Judiciary Committee - Stop Silencing Survivors**
  - **Sponsors:** Delegate Sandy Bartlett and Senator Sara Love
  - **Lead Group:** Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA)
    - This bill would have provided additional protections from retaliatory litigation for sexual assault survivors. It would have established an immunity from liability for a person who discloses information about allegations of sexually assaultive behavior if the person acts in good faith.
- **S.B.0156/H.B.0334 - Finance Committee - Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services**
  - **Sponsors:** Delegate Ken Kerr and Senator Karen Lewis Young
  - **Lead Group:** Frederick County Government
    - The amended bill establishes the Workgroup on Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services, which will collect data and costs, compare data for evidence-based models, and identify service gaps and workforce needs. It requires the Workgroup to issue a report with findings and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly by December 31, 2025.
- **S.B.0943/H.B.1050 - Judiciary COMMITTEE - Family and Law Enforcement Protection Act**
  - **Sponsors:** Delegate Sandy Bartlett and Senator Shelly Hettleman
  - **Lead Group:** Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence
    - This bill originally aimed to close gaps in the current protective order law by ensuring firearms are relinquished or removed from abusers and notifying victims if their abuser attempts to acquire firearms while under a protective order. The bill was changed to create a Task Force to Study the Use of Firearms in Domestic Violence Situations.

## Policy and Legislative Committee (PALS)

- **S.B.0632/H.B.1198 - Judiciary COMMITTEE - Correctional Services—Comprehensive Rehabilitative Prerelease Services—Female Incarcerated Individuals**
  - **Sponsors:** Delegate Charlotte Crutchfield and Senator Mary Washington
  - **Lead Group:** Maryland Justice Project
    - This bill would have required the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to implement comprehensive rehabilitative services to women classified in the prerelease status in the Life Skills and Reentry Center for Women (aka the Women’s Pre-release Facility).
- **S.B.0357/H.B.0424 - FINANCE COMMITTEE - Prescription Drug Affordability Board Act**
  - **Sponsors:** Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Delegate Jennifer White Holland, Senator Dawn Gile, Senator Brian Feldman, and Senator Katie Fry Hester
  - **Lead Group:** Maryland Health Care Coalition for All! Coalition
    - This bill extends the authority of Maryland’s Prescription Drug Affordability Board to establish a process for setting upper payment limits for purchases and payor reimbursements of prescription drug products.
- **S.B.0848/H.B.0930 - Finance COMMITTEE - Abortion Care Access fund of 2025**
  - **Sponsors:** Delegate Lesley Lopez and Senator Guy Guzzone
  - **Lead Group:** Women’s Law Center of Maryland
    - This bill establishes the Public Health Abortion Grant Program to provide grants to improve access to abortion care clinical services for individuals in the state. It addresses the emerging crisis facing Maryland abortion providers who are serving an increase in uninsured and underinsured people by creating the Public Health Abortion Grant Program Fund. The funding will come from \$25 million in unspent insurance premiums, accumulated over the last 10 years, for abortion coverage

## Policy and Legislative Committee (PALS)



### MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2025 CFW'S PRIORITY BILLS END OF SESSION UPDATE

- 1** S.B.0549/H.B.0629 - JUDICIARY COMMITTEE - STOP SILENCING SURVIVORS → **NOT PASSED**
- 2** S.B.0156/H.B.0334 - FINANCE COMMITTEE - UNIVERSAL NEWBORN NURSE HOME VISITING SERVICES → **PASSED**
- 3** S.B.0943/H.B.1050 - JUDICIARY COMMITTEE - FAMILY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PROTECTION ACT → **NOT PASSED**
- 4** S.B.0632/H.B.1198 - JUDICIARY COMMITTEE - CORRECTIONAL SERVICES—COMPREHENSIVE REHABILITATIVE PRERELEASE SERVICES—FEMALE INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS → **NOT PASSED**
- 5** S.B.0357/H.B.0424 - FINANCE COMMITTEE - PRESCRIPTION DRUG AFFORDABILITY BOARD ACT → **PASSED**
- 6** S.B.0848/H.B.0930 - FINANCE COMMITTEE - ABORTION CARE ACCESS FUND OF 2025 → **PASSED**

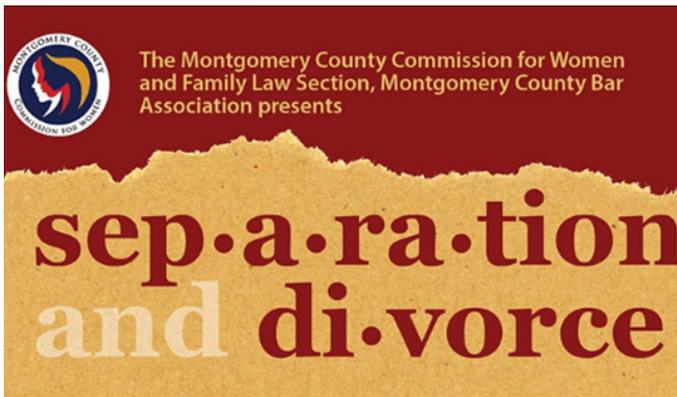
# Programming Committee

**Chair: Ijeoma Enendu**

**Members: Janet LaValle, Tonja Paylor**

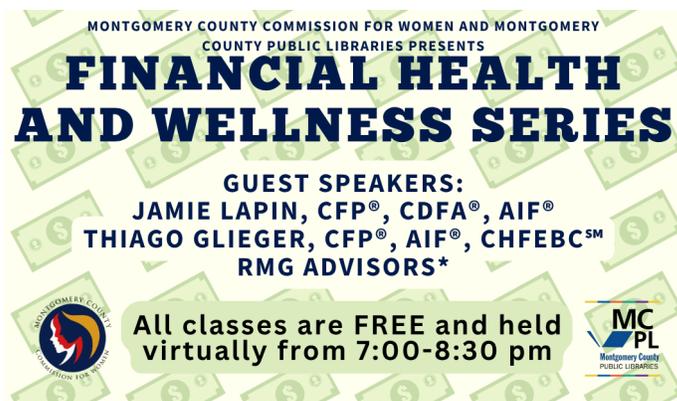
The Programming Committee worked diligently this fiscal year to host nearly 30 programs aimed at supporting and empowering women in Montgomery County. These programs play a vital role in providing essential support services and educational opportunities that help improve the status of women across the 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.

## FY25 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 the (1) Methods of Dispute Resolution, (2) When and Where to File, (3) Types of Divorce and Grounds, (4) Financial Statements, Alimony, Property and Equitable Distribution, (5) the Role of the Attorney, and (6) Domestic Violence/Orders of Protection. Seminars were held the first Wednesday of every month from 7-8:30 pm, from October through June. The seminars were free and offered virtually through Zoom.



### Financial Health & Wellness Series:

The Montgomery County Public Libraries partnered with the Commission to offer a series of financial seminars that walked participants through the ins and outs of "all things" money. The seminars were led by Jamie Lapin owner of Risk Management Group, LLC. Topics included Financial Planning 101, Planning for Retirement, Social Security and Medicare, Planning to Leave Federal Service, and Divorce and Money. The series was offered virtually throughout the year and were free.



# A VIRTUAL CAREER EXPLORATION *for her*

## A Virtual Career Exploration for Her

Hosted in partnership with Montgomery Women, this free virtual career guidance session for middle and high school female students provided the opportunity for young women to begin exploring careers of their interest that are non-traditional for women. Participants were able to meet women in non-traditional careers who provided insights into the reality of their careers. Students earned 2 SSL hours for participating in the event. This event was free and held on Zoom.

## 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>



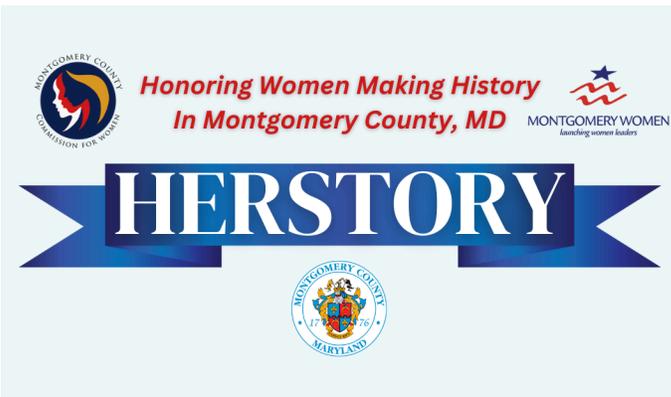
Questions? Email [cfwinfo@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:cfwinfo@montgomerycountymd.gov)

## Virtual Career Series

This fiscal year, we brought back our popular five-part Career Series, to help individuals strengthen their personal brand and place them on the path to finding a wonderful career. The sessions were free and open to all. Seminar topics included interviewing skills, resume writing, wage negotiation, networking, and entrepreneurship. Sessions were held via Zoom from 7-8:30 pm on April 29, May 6, May 13, May 20, and June 3, 2024. We had nearly 400 people register

## Women Making History

The Montgomery County Women Making History Award is an annual recognition established by the Montgomery County Commission for Women in collaboration with Montgomery Women. Launched in 2021, the award honors outstanding women who have made significant contributions to their professions and communities within Montgomery County, Maryland. Each year, during Women's History Month in March, honorees are celebrated for their exceptional leadership, dedication, and impact in areas such as civic engagement, professional excellence, and social change. Past honorees include trailblazers such as Lt. Governor Aruna Miller, Maryland Secretary of State Susan Lee, and community leaders like Effie Macklin, Kathy Stevens, and Carrie Fox. The award aims to inspire and empower others by highlighting the achievements of these remarkable women. Read about the 2025 honorees.





## Public Relations Committee

**Chair: Tonja Paylor**

**Committee Members: Arlinda Clark, Lindsey Turnbull, LaDonna King**

The Public Relations Committee provides strategic guidance on promoting the Commission for Women's programs and events. This year, the committee continued to expand the Commission's visibility by actively publicizing events, initiatives, and accomplishments across multiple platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and the CFW weekly newsletter. Sent every Friday afternoon, the newsletter now reaches an audience of nearly 25,000 subscribers.

Committee members also participated in several community events, where Commissioners engaged directly with residents by tabling and sharing information about the Commission's mission, services, and upcoming programs.

In addition to these outreach efforts, the Commission was honored to receive several proclamations from both the County Executive and County Council in recognition of its work and dedication to advancing key causes and priorities throughout Montgomery County.

# Public Relations Committee

## WOMENS HISTORY MONTH PROCLAMATION & EQUAL PAY DAY



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

**Chair:** Betty Romero (through December 2024), Sheena Foster (through January 2025–June 2025)

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

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

On August 10, 2024, the SPRE committee planned a strategic planning meeting and invited Commissioners. Outcomes included:

- **Overall goal:** Ensuring the focus of the Commission remained on Leadership, Education and the Workforce.
- **Leadership:** The Commission should educate the public on voting, elections, and the appointment process for boards and commission.
- **Education:** The Commission wishes to enhance collaboration with Montgomery College by supporting one program that aids women in the science, math and technology fields.
- **Workforce:** The Commission will continue to educate the community about the menopause in general, and the impact it has on women in the workplace. Legislation should be considered and supported that addresses the role of caregivers and how caregiving impacts the careers, education, and financial health of women.

In addition to the above goals, the Commission noted the importance of consistently reviewing the 2018 Status of Women report as part of ongoing strategic priorities.

On June 12, 2025, the Commission for Women had a second strategic planning meeting after the official board meeting. Ongoing goals continue to be:

- **Goal 1:** Promote Women's Economic Opportunity and Financial Security
- **Goal 2:** Empower Women in Politics, Government and Leadership
- **Goal 3:** Ensure Equity in Women's Health, Safety, and Education

Throughout the meeting, Commissioners began the process of creating specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely outcomes for each objective listed under the goal. The meeting was the first strategic planning meeting of a series.

# Liaison Accomplishments

## Respectfest

**Liaison:** Commissioner Mital Gajjar

RespectFest is a hybrid festival—offered both virtually and in person—designed for youth to raise awareness about teen dating violence and promote education around healthy relationships and consent.

The virtual portion of RespectFest took place from March 30 to April 6, featuring interactive Zoom workshops for middle and high school students on topics such as healthy relationships, consent, and bystander intervention. Students also had the option to explore various self-guided online activities, including modules on how to support a friend, recognizing healthy vs. unhealthy relationships, identifying warning signs, understanding different types of abuse (including technology abuse), and participating in a scenario-based quiz. Daily social media posts across Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook further supported learning and engagement by highlighting key educational themes.

The in-person festival was held on April 6 at the Wheaton Community Recreation Center, drawing over 350 attendees. The event featured a range of interactive educational booths and hands-on activities covering dating violence, consent, how to help a friend, bullying, financial abuse, and technology-related abuse. Parents and caregivers could also learn about how to talk to their children about these important topics. Attendees were invited to participate in wellness activities, including yoga sessions, as part of the holistic approach to relationship education. The Commission for Women once again sponsored an activity and information table and also assisted with the elementary school aged activities.

## RespectFEST



## Montgomery College Scholarship

**Liaison:** Commissioner Sheena Foster

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.

On April 11, Commissioners Foster and Tajammul attended the annual Montgomery College Scholarship Luncheon which highlights students and the importance of supporting scholarships.



**FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: COMMISSIONER SHUAA TAJAMMUL, MONTGOMERY COLLEGE PRESIDENT JERMAINE F. WILLIAMS, AND COMMISSIONER SHEENA FOSTER.**

# Liaison Accomplishments

## Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women

**Liaison:** Commissioner 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.



Commissioner 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

## Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

**Liaison:** Tondalayo Royster/LaDonna King

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.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATING COUNCIL MEMBERS**



# Liaison Accomplishments

## Human Trafficking Prevention Committee

**Liaison:** Commissioner 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. The Committee meets 6 times a year.

Commissioner Estrada actively participated in meetings throughout FY2025 and played a key role in keeping the Commission well-informed.

During FY2025, the Committee:

- Received nine training requests, reaching approximately 335 participants
- Provided support and testimony for Bill 25-24 — Contracts and Procurement: Prohibition Against Human Trafficking—Enforcement
- Participated in the County's Human Trafficking Awareness Month Proclamation in January 2025
- Collaborated with the Montgomery County Vice Unit to inspect bodywork establishments for compliance with county regulations. A total of 25 unique spas were inspected, with 8 receiving follow-up visits, resulting in 34 inspections overall. These efforts led to 30 civil citations, 10 felony charges, and the indefinite closure of one spa.



**HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS**