

Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women



Fiscal Year 2012 Annual Report

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Commissioners

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Stephanie L. Everett, Vice-Chair, Mattapan
Lucy Hartry, Secretary, Northampton
Marianne Fleckner, Treasurer, Westford
Linda Cavaioi, recent past chair, Worcester

Hanishi Thanawalla Ali, Westborough
Chris Chanyasulkit, Brookline
Rebecca Donham, Holliston
Kathleen Freeman, Wayland
Laurie Giardella, Nahant
Elizabeth Hart, Malden
Marcia Huttner, Wayland
Mary Kassler, Brookline
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Ruth Nemzoff, Brookline
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Jill Ashton, Director

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Annie Hodges
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Marta Pisera
Annisha Romney
Melissa Seward
Sam Zapora

INTRODUCTION

Mission

The mission of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women is to provide a permanent, effective voice for women across Massachusetts.

Charges

Under MA Chapter 3, Section 66 of the Massachusetts General Laws the MCSW is empowered to:

- Study, review and report on the status of women in the Commonwealth
- Advise executive and legislative bodies on the effect of proposed legislation on women
- Inform leaders of business, education, health care, state and local governments and the communications media of issues pertaining to women
- Provide referrals and serve as a resource of information on issues pertaining to women;
- Identify and recommend qualified women for positions at all levels of government
- Promote and facilitate collaboration among local women's commissions and among women's organizations in the state
- Serve as a liaison between government and private interest groups concerned with issues affecting women

Organization

The Commission is comprised of 19 members who are appointed by the Governor, the Senate President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Caucus of Women Legislators. Commissioners serve in a voluntary capacity and the work of the Commission is facilitated by a part-time director who is assisted by year-round interns.

The full Commission meets monthly, except in July and August, as does the MCSW Executive Committee. In addition, each commissioner is a member of at least one standing committee that also meets monthly. The standing committees are as follows:

- Legislative and Public Policy Committee
- Program and Planning Committee
- Budget and Personnel Committee

This 2011-2012 Annual Report includes the Commission's activities and findings for the period of July 2011 to June 2012.

2012 RECOMMENDATIONS TO APPOINTING AUTHORITIES

In accordance with the responsibilities of the MCSW under MA Chapter 3, Section 66 of the Massachusetts General Laws, the MCSW submits the following recommendations for action to our appointing authorities:

- **Pass An Act Further Defining Comparable Work (S931/H1415)**

Passage of this bill would help to eliminate the wage gap by ensuring that work requiring similar skill, effort, and responsibility performed under similar working conditions be compensated equally. In 2010, women made on average \$0.77 for every \$1 earned by men when controlling for factors such as education level and work experience. This figure has remained basically stagnant since 1993, indicating that the wage gap is not closing without intervention.

This bill is also a critical component of economic recovery. The majority of jobs lost during the recession were lost by men, leaving more households dependent upon women's income. Massachusetts families cannot afford to wait any longer for steps to be taken toward closing the wage gap once and for all.

- **Support legislation and budget items that address the issue of women's self sufficiency**

In addition to eliminating the wage gap in Massachusetts, guaranteeing earned paid sick time (S930/H1398) and ending gender discrimination in disability insurance policies (S413/H1173) are key components of establishing women's full self sufficiency. Currently, nearly one million workers across the state lack a single guaranteed paid sick day to care for themselves or a loved one when ill. For these workers, this means that they could lose a day's pay or, at worst, their job. This harsh reality disproportionately affects women as they tend to be the primary caretakers of the family and are increasingly the primary bread winners.

Women also face unnecessary financial burdens when purchasing individual disability insurance. As one of the only two types of insurance in the state that can legally charge women more than men, disability insurance providers often charge women 25% to 75% more than their male peers. This is blatant gender discrimination and a direct violation of the Massachusetts Equal Rights Amendment.

- **Support legislation and budget items that address issues of domestic violence and violence against women; increase the integration of services to best meet the needs of the members of this population**

Based on information collected by the MCSW through constituent contact and public hearings, sexual assault and domestic violence remain some of the most pervasive concerns facing women in the Commonwealth. The Commission has recommitted itself to advancing efforts in this area and commends the work of policy makers dedicated to achieving progress on behalf of survivors.

By endorsing and advocating on behalf of An Act Providing Housing Rights to Victims of Domestic Violence, Rape, Sexual Assault and Stalking (S586/H386), the Commission seeks to ensure that no one in Massachusetts will ever have to choose between the safety of themselves and their family and keeping or finding housing.

Additionally, while the Commission recognizes the constraints of the state budget it advises against the reduction of resources directed towards survivors of violence against women

- **Establish regional commissions on the status of women**

The Commission supports and is invested in the further establishment of county and regional commissions on the status of women. The Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women (S2099) would be created in the same model as the MCSW and the four existing county and regional commissions. The creation of the Worcester County Commission is consistent with the Commission's goal of increasing women's political participation in the Commonwealth.

MCSW BUDGET

Commission on the Status of Women BUDGET FY12	
	FY12 GAA
Total Income from State Appropriation	\$70,000
Expenses	
Salaries	\$56,349
Operating Expenses	\$13,651
Total Expenses	\$70,000

In FY10 the Commission's budget was reduced by 73% (from \$250,000 in FY2009). This required the Commission to reduce staff from 3.5 FTEs to 0.6 FTE. With increased involvement of unpaid commissioners, unpaid interns and unpaid volunteers, and by reducing office operations from 5 to 3 days per week, the Commission has been able to operate with this budget cut. However, it has severely affected the ability of the Commission to do its work. The MCSW commissioners also solicited private and corporate funds for the MCSW Trust Fund which helps fund research projects and commission activities.

Moving forward, the Commission will request an increase in the budget for funding at the level of \$140,000 for FY14. This increase would allow the Commission the ability to effectively carry out its mission and better serve the women of Massachusetts. To put this budget increase in perspective, it must be noted that in 2001 the Commission operated on a budget of \$195,000. When first established, the legislature deemed it necessary that the Commission receive this amount in order to properly execute its charges. Adjusting for over ten years of inflation and considering the Commission's record of achievement with limited resources, an increase to \$140,000 is an appropriate request that would ensure the Commission's ability to provide a permanent and effective voice for women of the Commonwealth.

PROGRAMS AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES

Public Hearings

In keeping with its mandate to study and report on the status of women and girls living in the Commonwealth, the Commission holds regional public hearings to hear the concerns of women. Area legislators and public officials are invited to attend. The Commission uses hearing testimony to shape and influence its legislative advocacy work and its annual recommendations to the appointing authorities.

The Commission held four public hearings during FY12:

Essex County Public Hearing, Middleton's Flint Library, October 3, 2011

Key issues raised at this hearing included:

- Women, and especially single female-headed households, living in poverty; funding for family planning services; violence against women and services for survivors; equal pay; human trafficking; assistance for women with disabilities and mental illnesses; education on legal rights.

Springfield Public Hearing, YWCA of Western Massachusetts, November 9, 2011

Key issues raised at this hearing included:

- Violence against women; services for women suffering from trauma and living with disabilities; state funding for programs to improve the lives of women; rights and services for survivors of rape; child care; breaking the cycle of poverty; earned paid sick days; funding for family planning and reproductive health.

Cape Cod & Islands Public Hearing, Massachusetts Maritime Academy, January 25, 2012

Key issues raised at this hearing included:

- Mental health and drug abuse cycles among women; lack of access to medical care on the Cape; lack of full-time sustainable work; violence against women and domestic violence; access to affordable legal services; lack of services for retired and aging women; midwifery services; funding for employment training; lack of affordable housing.

Brockton Public Hearing, Brockton High School, March 28, 2012

Key issues raised at this hearing included:

- Violence against women; affordable housing and childcare; programs for young girls; services for female veterans; health services for older women.

Full hearing reports are available in the appendix.

County and Regional Women's Commissions

Modeled after the MCSW, the four unfunded county and regional women's commissions were legislatively created to study and report on the status of women and girls in their geographical areas, and to provide permanent and effective voices for women and girls. Each county and regional commission reports their findings annually to MCSW.

Once the legislation has passed to establish a county or regional commission, MCSW solicits and reviews commissioner applications, makes appointments, hosts a formal inaugural event to have the new commissioners sworn in, and conducts an opening session.

After the initial appointments have been made and the opening session conducted, MCSW continues to offer significant support to the commissions and oversees the appointments and

reappointments of commissioners. MCSW frequently convenes with regional commissions in order to maintain strong partnerships and build the capacity of regional commissions.

The Commission has endorsed proposed legislation to establish a Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women (see Legislation and Public Policy section), which would function in the same way as the four existing county and regional women's commissions. This legislation has reported favorably out of multiple committees and it is expected to pass by the end of the current legislative session. The Commission also has a strong interest in legislation that would establish a Norfolk County Commission on the Status of Women.

Current Regional Commissions

- Berkshire County Commission on the Status of Women, 9 members from Berkshire County, established in 2005
- Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women, 9 members from Bristol County, established in 2008
- Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women, 13 total members from Barnstable, Dukes, and Nantucket Counties, established in 2009
- Essex County Commission on the Status of Women, 9 members from Essex County, established in 2010

Local Women's Commissions

There are currently nine local Women's Commissions that represent various cities and towns in the Commonwealth. While these Commissions are independent of MCSW, the Commission serves as a resource and partner for local commissions and maintains contact with them on a regular basis.

Local commissions include: Boston Women's Commission; Brockton Mayor's Commission on Women's Issues; Brookline Commission on Women; Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women; Newton Commission on the Status of Women; Quincy Mayor's Commission on Women; Somerville Commission for Women; Springfield Commission for Women; and Worcester City Manager's Advisory Committee on the Status of Women.

Research

Per its enabling legislation the Commission is empowered to study, review, and report on the status of women in the Commonwealth as well as advise executive and legislative bodies on the effect of proposed legislation on women.

MCSW is interested in research that examines and reports on the state of women's lives across the Commonwealth. In the past, we have partnered with various separate agencies that focus on this type of research. The Commission collaborated with the UMASS Boston Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, raised funds to commission research with the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, encouraged and supported organizations that do research on women such as the Southeastern Massachusetts Women's Fund. MCSW is interested in continuing these critical efforts to acquire accurate data. The Commission is currently working on the annual State of Women Report that is expected to be released in September 2012.

Ninth Annual “Unsung Heroines of Massachusetts” Program

On May 16, 2012, MCSW hosted its ninth Annual Unsung Heroine Celebration at the State House. This event honored 88 Heroines from cities and towns across the Commonwealth. The Unsung Heroines are women who without fanfare or recognition make the Commonwealth a better place to work and live. The Unsung Heroines “don’t make the news, but make a difference.”

This year, the Commission partnered with state legislators to identify women who perform significant acts of service on behalf of their communities. The nomination process identifies women of all ages, economic, political, geographic and ethnic backgrounds. All of the Unsung Heroine honorees are honored at a State House ceremony where they receive appreciation from a grateful Commonwealth. We were so pleased to share the day with more than 50 legislators.

This event is funded through generous corporate sponsorship, individual donations, and the MCSW Trust Fund.

MCSW Internship Program

Preparing the next generation of leaders remains an important component for the Commission. As an extension of this commitment MCSW offers for-credit internship opportunities to students from universities and colleges across the country. Internships, both for credit and non-credit, are extended during fall semester, spring semester and again through the summer. During the 2011 – 2012 academic year the Commission hosted thirteen interns.

ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION

International Women's Day 2012

On March 8, 2012 the MCSW hosted the annual International Women's Day Breakfast at Simmons College with over thirty additional organizations. The commission was proud to serve as a member, with eighteen other organizations of the IWD planning board in order to guarantee the success of the event. This year's breakfast specifically focused on the issue of domestic violence and hosted an informed and eloquent panel to speak on the issue. The event educated, engaged, and inspired action focused on the prevention of domestic violence.

Equal Pay Day

The purpose of Equal Pay Day is to raise awareness of the wage gap that exists between men and women. Equal Pay Day marks the day to which women must work in order to earn the same amount that their male colleagues made in the previous year. On April 11, 2012, the MCSW, along with the Caucus of Women Legislators, hosted an event at the State House featuring guest speakers who testified to the importance of equal pay, equality, and the positive effect that pay equity has on the economy. Equal Pay Day also served as a platform to advocate for An Act Further Defining Comparable Work (S931/H1415).

Disparities Action Network

The Disparities Action Network (DAN) is a statewide coalition of advocates, researchers, providers and institutions that work to reduce health disparities in the Commonwealth through legislative advocacy and education. Founded at Health Care for All in 2006, DAN represents over 60 statewide organizations focused on addressing the complex issues that underlie health inequality. Commissioner Chanyasulkit attends and represents MCSW at DAN meetings. Currently, DAN is analyzing how best to support the Office of Health Equity Budget Amendment, to ensure inclusion of the Office of Health Equity (H1517), and is researching the Community-Based Grants Program (H1518) in the Payment Reform legislation.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

Priority Bills

In order to continue the Commission's mission of providing an effective voice for the women of Massachusetts, MCSW identifies priority bills to be the center of our legislative focus. In the 2011-2012 year, the Commission focused on addressing women's self sufficiency through the following legislation.

S00931/H01415 - An Act Further Defining Comparable Work

- **Lead Sponsors:** Representative Patricia Jehlen, Representative Alice Wolf
- **Summary of Bill:** This legislation would define the term "comparable work" by adding the following definition to Chapter 149 in the General Laws. After the first sentence of 105A, the definition would dictate that the "comparability of two positions shall be solely based on whether the two positions entail comparable skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions between employees of the opposite sex."

S00930/H01398- An Act Establishing Earned Paid Sick Time

- **Lead Sponsors:** Senator Patricia D. Jehlen, Representative Kay Khan
- **Summary of Bill:** An Act Establishing Earned Paid Sick Time would mandate that all employers provide a minimum of 7 earned paid sick days per year or pro rate a number of days of paid leave for employees working less than 30 hours per week on a year round basis or less than 1,500 hours per year. Earned paid sick time may be used by employees for themselves or to care for their child, spouse, parent or parent of spouse. This time can be used for illness, injury or health condition that requires staying home or professional medical care, attending routine medical appointments, and absences for domestic violence victims. Employers may require medical certification for any absence that exceeds 3 consecutive days and will not be required to provide more than 7 earned paid sick days in any given year.

S00414/H01173- An Act Providing Equitable Coverage in Disability Insurance

- **Lead Sponsors:** Representative Ruth Balsler, Senator Katherine Clark
- **Summary of Bill:** An Act Providing Equitable Coverage in Disability Insurance would eliminate gender discrimination in disability insurance policies. It would prevent insurance companies from charging women more for the same benefits as men in the same job classification. This legislation would bring Massachusetts disability and life insurance into line with all federally regulated insurance, as well as Massachusetts health insurance, automobile insurance, homeowners' insurance, and annuities.

In addition to the priority bills listed above, MCSW tracks over 30 other bills that would impact or affect the status of women across Massachusetts. A selection of our tracked bills are listed below.

S00586/H00386- An Act Relative to Housing Rights for Victims of Domestic Violence

- **Lead Sponsors:** Senator Cynthia Creem, Representative Ellen Story

- **Summary of Bill:** Allows for victims of domestic violence or similar claims to quit tenant agreements when necessary and proven; protects victims from being discriminately disqualified from housing either by having their rental agreement terminated against their will or being denied tenancy or renewed tenancy due to domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, stalking situations or a history of terminating rental agreements for the same reasons; make it illegal for third parties to inform potential landlords of this information; ensure that landlords either respond within 48 hours to requests for lock changes or allow the tenant to change the lock themselves. Make provision for victims and/or affected members of their household to terminate their rental agreement without further obligation provided they present their landlord with a written statement from a “qualified third party” that he or she is a victim of domestic violence, rape, sexual assault or stalking within six months of obtaining the statement.

H00463- An Act Requiring the Inclusion of Certain Civil Rights Offense Information in the Statewide Domestic Violence Record Keeping System

- **Lead Sponsor:** Rep. David Linsky
- **Summary of Bill:** This bill would allow the statewide domestic violence record keeping system to authorize and direct the commissioner of probation to produce any injunction (temporary, preliminary, permanent or final) issued. In other words any information related to any injunction issued that is pursuant to certain civil rights offenses shall be made available to judges and to criminal justice agencies through a recordkeeping system maintained by the executive office of public safety.

S00918– An Act to Establish Employment Leave and Safety Remedies to Victims of Domestic Violence, Stalking, and Sexual Assault

- **Lead Sponsor:** Senator Cynthia Creem
- **Summary of Bill:** This bill would establish up to fifteen days of leave for an employee in any twelve months if the employee or a family member of the employee is a victim of domestic violence. The leave only applies if used to address issues arising from the assault incident. Leave would be granted after all vacation, personal and sick leaves have been exhausted unless the employer waives this requirement. The bill also calls for the development of workplace safety policies, including training to increase awareness and help employers respond to disclosure by victims.

S01522- An Act Strengthening Working Families by Increasing Tax Exemptions and Dependent Care Tax Credits

- **Lead Sponsor:** Senator Karen Spilka
- **Summary of Bill:** This bill would promote successful policies and practices in the public and private sectors to address problems facing working families in the Commonwealth. This bill would establish a Work Family Council in the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development to develop broadly shared understandings of critical work-family issues in the Commonwealth through privately funded research, experimentation, and education. The council would submit a bi-annual written report of its activities to the Secretary of Economic Development and Housing and the Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development.¹ This bill comes from a part of the former Act Supporting Strong Families by Providing Paid Family and Medical Leave, Increasing Tax Deductions, and Establishing a Work-Family Council.

¹ Office of Senator Karen E. Spilka

Legislative Accomplishments

- S764/H502- An Act Relative to Transgender Equal Rights, signed by the Governor 11/13/2011
- S827/H3808- An Act Relative to the Commercial Exploitation of People, signed by the Governor 11/21/2011

List of Testimony Submitted

- An Act to Establish Employment Leave and Safety Remedies to Victims of Domestic Violence, Stalking, and Sexual Assault, given 6/8/2011
- An Act to Further Define Comparable Work, given 6/9/2011
- An Act to Establish Paid Sick days, given 7/14/2011
- An Act to Authorize the Human Resources Division to Undertake a Study of the State's Job Classification System, given 10/18/2011
- An Act Relative to Housing Right for Victims of Domestic Violence, given on 11/1/2011
- An Act Providing for Equitable Coverage in Disability Policies, given 1/25/2012
- An Act Establishing a Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women, given 2/29/2012

Appendix

**Essex County Public Hearing Notes 10/18/11
Flint Public Library, Middleton**

9:58: Becky Halowell

The Women's Fund of Essex County

- Wants to share very current, key findings from the 2010 American Community Survey released the previous month by the US Census. The findings of the survey confirm that women and girls continue to bear a significantly disproportionate burden of poverty, workplace inequity and other barriers to self-sufficiency and self-determination. Wants to focus on women who are single heads of households, AKA female householders. Poverty is particularly acute for female householders and their families: 27% of Essex County's children are living in female householder homes. Critical issues affect not only the well-being of these women but also the future of their children, as well as the long term strength of the community. Over 1/5 or 21% of all Essex County families are headed by a female householder with the numbers increasing, 66% of female householders have one or more children, only 38% of female householders own their own homes, 62% rent which is the lowest percentage of home ownership among all family types. Median income of female headed households is just over \$36,000 and even lower for female heads with children: \$29,000/year. 33% of female householders with children live below poverty line, a sharp contrast to male householders who are at only 13%. The level of poverty increases significantly with increased numbers of children, with 63% of female householders with 3-4 children living below the poverty line. With a 21% higher cost of living in Essex County than in other parts of the country, she fairly concludes that the actual numbers of women and children living in poverty are much higher than the numbers presented. The numbers suggest that strategically focusing on female householders and their families can be a highly effective approach in targeting poverty and the issues that surround it.

15:45: Gabrielle Ross

Health Quarters of Beverly, MA

- Health Quarters provides services in family planning and preventive health with priority given to low income individuals. They have three freestanding clinics in Beverly, Haverhill, and Lawrence. Family planning is a very important and basic health necessity that allows women the right to decide freely and responsibly when they want to have children as well as education and information to do so. Planning results in better maternal and infant health, protection against STDs as well as cancers. For every public dollar spent on family planning four dollars are saved in Medicaid costs in prenatal and newborn care alone. HQ clinics are very important for vulnerable groups of men and women and are the only source of affordable and confidential reproductive health care in Essex. Asks for support for state and federal funding in providing family planning services in Essex County. Most recent data says about 1.5 million women age 13-44 need contraceptive services and supplies in Massachusetts. In Essex County, three cities have the highest rates of teen birth in the state. At state level, funding for services have been cut by 22% since 2009 leaving many providers caring for clients without any reimbursement. Urges support for legislature in favor of funding family services that are critical to public health efforts.

21:47: Susan Staples

YWCA of Greater Lawrence

- Wants to focus on the issue of violence against women. The YWCA has two programs that serve victims of violence. Their Sexual Assault Program has 24-hour hotline that received over 600 calls from community members in the last year. SA program also has a 24 hour response to local hospitals where someone from the program is sent to the hospital to support victims and their families, last year they responded to 150 calls from victims aged 2-79. YWCA also provides the Domestic Violence Program. Last year domestic violence counseling was provided to 306 survivors and 39 families were given

shelter. YWCA court advocates working in Lawrence District court assisted with 759 restraining orders last year, and between only July and September assisted with 211 cases of domestic violence. The YWCA is very busy responding to the needs of the community but a recent murder of a mother and her two teenage children during Labor Day weekend is a painful reminder that much more work needs to be done. The YWCA focuses on prevention/education work and provided educational workshops to over 1400 youth. This is not enough, however, to fully combat cultural and societal norms about violence against women. To fully address the issue, a movement that demands people be entitled to safety in their own homes is necessary. Calls for a movement that parallels the campaign against tobacco use in the US, which was very effective in changing societal norms and attitudes toward smoking.

28:00: Marisa DeFranco
MCSW

- In her experience on the commission for last 3 years, learned that legislative work is imperative. For the Comparable work bill on equal pay, visits to legislators definitely make a difference. Did more than 40 legislative visits for this bill. Most people do not realize that miniscule numbers of votes can be the passing or non-passing factor for legislature. Once women have financial control in economics they will have more control over other issues.

32:10: Liz Fragola
American Association of University Women

- Wants to focus on the issue of human trafficking. In Boston just last month, a man was indicted on 10 counts for driving teenage girls to and from hotels in Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk counties for prostitution. Trafficking is happening everywhere, not just cities or third world countries. A bill recently went back to committee that would place tougher laws on trafficking perpetrators, it is important to appeal to legislators to show support for legislature against trafficking. Greater fines are known to be a deterrent for behavior, in this case prostitution. Wants to share some facts from a recent article: the average age for entering prostitution is 13, and if a girl is sold to 10 men 6 nights per week she will be statutorily raped over 1500 times by the time she is 18.

36:10: Candace Waldron
HAWC

- Agrees that trafficking victims have often been victims of sexual abuse, all issues are interconnected. HAWC is a domestic violence shelter that is full all the time, lack of housing is very difficult for the organizations. Very difficult for people to find jobs that will support children and housing at the same time so HAWC shelter stays are much longer because they cannot support themselves on their own. Housing assistance service is often difficult to access for domestic violence victims due to the regulations. Housing authorities often discriminate against victims of domestic violence even though they are supposed to have priority status. Many undocumented immigrants are victims of domestic violence, yet do not call hotlines for fear of being deported back to their home country.

41:00 Testimony on behalf of Mary Margaret Moore
Independent Living Center of North Shore and Cape Ann

- Endorses need for equal access for women to the community at large, especially in terms of economic independence. Urges the ECCSW to focus on the needs of women living with disabilities and women living under the economic poverty line. She offers her assistance in those efforts to the audience.

42:30 Ana Rodriguez, Case Manager

- She provides services to young adults that have been diagnosed with chronic mental illness. Many of them are young women who have decided to parent children at a young

age. Many of these women do not understand the responsibility of having a child and are financially dependent on social security benefits. These benefits are good, but do not offer any way to obtain child care for their young ones. Access to child care would allow these young women to take the road of recovery and allow them to develop vocational skills. The lack of access to affordable child care presents an obstacle for these young women as well as other young mothers in the Commonwealth.

2nd Audio File

00:10 Janice Vargas

Lawrence Housing Development, HRC

- Concerned with rights of women in the development. Has lived 12 years in public housing, people living in public housing need to know their rights. The housing authority knows the laws and rights, but the people who live their do not. The people in public housing need respect, education, and support.

Springfield Public Hearing 11/9/11
YWCA of Springfield

9:00 Maria Rodman

Western Mass Training Consortium

- Working with Franklin County women, she wants to give a voice to those who are victims of violence. Being born female is a risk factor for violence. We are experiencing a public health crisis: violence impacts all of us, studies have shown that the trauma of violence against women affects the health, economy and lifespan of women. Adverse childhood experiences can result in negative outcomes, like shortened lifespan and increased disease. Without intervention, this cycle of violence will continue. 90% of mental public health clients have been exposed to sexual, physical or mental trauma. Annual cost of long term consequences of unaddressed trauma to be over 103 billion dollars. Programs need to be trauma-informed to provide a safe and supportive context for victims of violence. To be trauma informed means incorporating the knowledge, outcomes of violence in programs. It means to be aware of the impact of trauma across the lifespan.

15:50 Alexis Warce

YWCA

- Worked on an OVW grant that the YWCA and Goodwill received. The specific focus was abuse of people with disabilities. Wants to talk about the rights of abuse victims with disabilities. Studies show that more than 90% of people with developmental disabilities will experience abuse in their lifetime. Only 3% of this abuse will be reported. There are many barriers to services that are even worse for people with disabilities. Accessibility has a wide range of meaning, it can mean more than just a ramp or a bar in a bathroom. Communication needs to be improved for people with disabilities. This can mean employee training for dealing with people with disabilities.

21:30 Michele Crochetiere

YWCA

- Oversees 20 low-income apartments, and government compliance as well as supportive services. Women living there have some sort of abuse in their background, and are motivated to make their lives better. There's a gap in the housing system in Massachusetts – affordable housing is not readily available. Not necessarily just for extremely low-income levels, most people struggle with affordable living. There are only a small number of vouchers available, 5-10 year waitlist for Section 8. Even if women are homeless and have a domestic violence background, and should therefore be priority, are still waiting some times 5 years.

27:15 Julie Kumble

Women's fund of Western Massachusetts

- Focuses: education access and success, economic justice, and freedom from violence. Need the state to step up and provide more funding, small programs cannot do it alone. Hoping that women in local leadership will be able to take a larger stand on a state level, with the help of mentorship.

30:00 Michael Ann Bewsee

Arise for Social Justice

- Tells story of rape survivor who cannot get lease renewed, is being discriminated against by landlord. Another women who was assaulted by 16 year old daughter, who was brought to a juvenile center and then taken by DCF. The mother was asked to drive daughter from DCF to high school daily in her unregistered car, and she refused to break the law, and is also afraid of daughter. Tells story of homeless woman staying at Jesse's

House, was placed in an apartment that turns out to be riddled with prostitution and drug use and rodents. She is being evicted for withholding rent. She falls into the category of families that are homeless or close to homeless, which is a huge problem in Springfield. Has contacted agencies that deal with homelessness, and did not receive a response that elicits hope. "We are desperate for some real systemic change and some real social justice."

35:00 Beth Spong

MotherWoman

- Serves four counties, helping the primary caregivers- mothers and grandmothers. By investing in the welfare of all mothers they hope to break the cycles of poverty, neglect, substance abuse, and violence. "Our children need to be safe and whole and well-loved, and that means their mothers need to be safe and whole and strong." The agency is creating a coalition of providers of service to mothers to assure that gaps in care are closed. "Becoming a mother is the single biggest factor in a woman experiencing poverty." Encourages CSW to endorse and advocate for legislation that supports mothers and families: Earned Paid Sick Time and Safe Pregnancies Legislation for women experiencing incarceration.

44:40 Lucy Hartry

Tapestry Health

- Agency that provides family planning and reproductive health to women in all four counties in Western Mass. Their goal has been to serve low-income women, especially teenagers, and other disenfranchised groups that don't have a voice. Tapestry uses state funding to provide services that women wouldn't be able to get otherwise, but that state funding has been cut so Tapestry is no longer able to provide those health services without funding. Springfield has recently received a significant amount of funding to help prevent teen pregnancy but also to provide support for teen parents should they become pregnant. Social injustice is at the root of the problems that have been discussed, especially among minority populations.

51:13 Question : How do you see your power and privilege in our legislative process such that the stories being told here, the statistics being shared and the efforts by women's groups being shared will impact policy at the legislative level in our state? Wants to ensure that the information doesn't disappear.

Further discussion about:

- what happens to the testimonies
- they are submitted and reported, they do not fall on deaf ears
- how different Western Ma is from other parts of Massachusetts, how this rural setting gives rise to different problems
- excessive teen pregnancy rates compared to state averages
- the amount of drug deals occurring in Western Mass

Cape and Islands Public Hearing 1/25/2012
Massachusetts Maritime Academy, Buzzard's Bay

7:20 Joanne Sykes

Falmouth Public School Mental Health Services

- Sees the cycle of failure repeatedly through public health work, offers parent education and training, but doesn't get to help parents who are home and struggling and fighting. Homes are in turmoil, children come to school from these homes, many of which she must send for psych evaluations. The issues that are affecting adults and families are finding their way into the school. The children who need treatment and support must look off-Cape. Prescription drug and substance abuse problem on Cape, the cycle continues. Many of these problems are due to poverty, which is a result of problems with the system and inability to access services. Stress level for these mostly single mothers is extreme, resources for them aren't readily available, and they must fight so hard to get them. "I feel like I spend my days in the middle of a river, and all I'm doing is taking these high risk teenagers and pulling them to shore, hoping that someone can hang on to them, but they slip back in again."

12:15 Andi Genser

Executive Director of WE CAN (Women's Empowerment Through Cape Area Networking)

- Provide services at no charge to women who contact them, information, referrals, workshops, group and individual mentoring, training and consultations. In the past year they have offered services to twice as many women as in previous years. There is a lack of full-time sustainable work for women on the Cape. "This underlying issue is the cause of so many ripples that they are indeed like a wave, or perhaps like a tsunami." The women that come to us are in the midst of many different problems. There is a huge amount of domestic violence, many women lack health care. Would like research published about the problems for women in the commonwealth. Also more resources need to be available in the Cape. Training and education should be available for these women, and not just the kind of training that results in low-paying jobs.

19:00 Kara Duff

Staff Member of WE CAN

- "Women are struggling." Legal issues are a great concern – women don't have the means to hire attorneys. The legal system is very complex, full of procedures that people don't know how to navigate without help. Legal services keep shrinking – the services currently cover many counties and can't make a dent in what just the Cape is facing in terms of need. "There are no resources for families that have worked really hard to be productive in society." WE CAN offers legal workshops and clinics, but often times that's not enough, and they don't have the means to do more. "The disparity between the men and the women is huge." Funding for legal services is needed; oftentimes women find themselves in court without the proper representation, sitting across from their abuser. "We need women to be able to get the help and the justice they deserve."

24:45 Rosanne Shapiro

Social Worker

- Was forced out of retirement when resources depleted. Federal government refused to increase social security payments, even though the cost of living has gone up. Isn't eligible for certain services because of income, finds herself in a sort of middle ground. Many women on The Cape are 60 and older and are worried about managing in the coming years, even though they have worked hard all their lives.

28:50 Amanda Haddad
Midwife, RN

- Offers services to women who can't afford her. When working in maternity at Cape Cod Hospital, saw a lot of women on methadone maintenance programs. Babies going into withdrawals, hospital not equipped to deal with it. Problem has gotten exponentially worse. "If women have a good birth experience, it makes them better parents." Had substance abuse issues and was pregnant, and the midwife saved her life, took such good care of her – she had to go off Cape for her. Methadone clinics making money off of these patients? They are told they can't go off treatment or they'll start using again. House bill 2368 – act relative to certified professional midwives – seeks to legalize and regulate certified professional midwives.

37:20 Deb Foss
WE CAN

- Speaking on behalf of a single parent of a disabled child. Deplorable state of mental health services for the disabled. When daughter began to have behavioral issues that escalated to self-injurious actions, she reached out to DES, DCF, social worker, doctors. Due to lack of state funding, no services available until her behavior became bad enough to be hospitalized. Chance for daughter to be taken away if she injures herself under care of mom. When entered to hospital and eventual pediatric treatment, was not treated adequately. Services need to be provided in state before hospitalization is needed.

41:40 Denise Washington

- Single woman, victim of domestic violence and mental abuse. Ended up relocating, leaving her family and friends behind, and she found herself alone. Couldn't afford to go to court. WE CAN helped her, supported her. Someone must speak up. "The worst thing about abuse is being alone. I'm here as a survivor so I can pass on the baton to the next woman." Studied to know the language of the court, since lawyer wasn't available to her, but her husband had two lawyers at his disposal. "I must stand for those that can't speak out. I must stand for those that don't know they have a right, they are worthy."

47:25 Joan McDonald

Workforce Investment Board, director of youth services, mentor for WE CAN

- Came back to Cape to help her sister care for her aging parents. Became health advocates for parents, devoted a lot of time, lost money, postponed continuing education, willingly gave up pieces of their lives in order to advocate for their health. Learned how to deal with pharmacy, insurance company, how to elder-proof the house to keep father safe, learned how NOT to be a daughter when bathing father. Sister is a nurse, knew how to navigate health system. "Had to deal with being a parent of our parents, and a witness and participant in end-of-life issues that most of us aren't prepared to deal with."

51:00 Jane Bourette
WE CAN

- Speaking on behalf of Stephanie, Cape resident who couldn't be there because she is working at one of her part-time jobs. Concerns: health care. Many middle-aged women on the Cape are forced to work multiple part-time jobs to make ends meet, which leaves them without benefits and health insurance. Many of these women have varying degrees, and are experienced, which makes them too expensive to hire full-time, and there is no affordable healthcare option for these women. There needs to be a way that working people wanting and needing health care can get it, and state plans are too expensive. Unemployment health insurance has very few Cape providers, even fewer mental health Cape providers. Customer service providers keep you waiting on the phone for hours. Often make too much to qualify for MassHealth, but can't afford Commonwealth Care. "This issue, one way or another, affects us all."

54:45 Pauline Pedula

WE CAN

- Extreme lack of financial funding in place through the Division of Employment and Training (DETM) on the Cape. "Do you feel that we are only capable of becoming hair dressers, hair stylists, and cosmetologists? These three career choices are the only opportunities for assisted training for workforce economic growth offered to the women of Cape Cod."

58:20 Beverly Costa-Ciavola

Cape Cod Neighborhood Support Coalition, Director

- Works for prevention of child abuse. We need preventative funds rather than intervention funds – much more cost efficient. Highest rate of suicide for youth in MA. "We are seeing an inordinate amount of young people, kids as young as ten years old (and younger!) with severe depression, alcohol and drug issues, who are then turning to suicide." Samaritan volunteer, hears stories on hotline. A lot of grandparents raising their grandchildren, many times informally, because mothers have to work many jobs. These grandparents can't live in senior housing if they are taking care of grandchildren, they are losing lots of benefits, and they are working beyond their capacity for work in order to bring in extra money. "We need to start looking at these issues in a more proactive way." Domestic violence victims are struggling in many ways – prevention dollars could help. "We have great ideas, but no way of funding them."

1:06:30 Rebecca Taylor

Midwife, Shellfish Farmer

- Newly married, have no money for housing. Currently living in a rental, and for months they have to leave and sleep in a camper so landlords can come back. Both she and husband and she have jobs (more than one) but can still not find affordable housing. Young people often can't afford her midwife services or childbirth classes, and go to the hospitals with high c-section rates. "If you don't know what your options are, you don't *have* options." Hoping for more grant money for nurse midwives. People who are interested have no way to access care. Another concern – as a married woman who kept her own name, why is everything in his name?

1:11:40 Evelyn Young

Cape Cod Center for Women

- Need more funding, can provide more services. The state budget doesn't allow for these services, and we should go to the state and say 'per bed' or 'per person' we need X amount of money. How can we all work together to serve and tackle these items one at a time? Need to advocate together.

1:24:10 Jessica Petrone

Certified Professional Midwife

- Representing Massachusetts Midwives Alliance. Legislation – and act relative to certified midwives. "Giving life to the next generation is, without question, the single most vital pursuit shared by all life." Mothers and babies need to be treated with respect, and given a safe and satisfying experience, we should look at birth as a human rights issue. Midwives are most appropriate care provider for women with low risk pregnancies. This bill will set high standards of practice for out-of-hospital midwifery care, and promote equality of services to women and protect the public from unsafe practices. Also to establish accountability and foster development of the profession.

1:30:40

Rebecca on behalf of Dr. Mindy Levin

Chiropractor

- Women must leave island and family sometimes for weeks to have a vaginal birth instead of a scheduled c-section at the hospital. Legislation SB 1123 and HB 2368 for CPMs in Massachusetts.

1:32:40

Meredith on behalf of Brenda Swain

Cape Cod Hunger Network, Falmouth Service Center

- Food pantries have seen increases in clients over the past four years, and more times than not, the head of household is a woman. Concerned with the rise in domestic violence and substance abuse. Seasonal employment is also a large problem on the Cape during the winter. Single family head of household mothers have been diagnosed with breast cancer, and they must secure food and financial support during their treatment.

Brockton Public Hearing 3/28/12
Brockton Public High School

11:40

Pat Foley: Brockton Women's Commission

- Women's lives are very complicated, yet we all share very similar concerns. Talks about her first job in a battered women's shelter and how grassroots organizations such as that one often have trouble staying together. Feels that women's issues have taken the back burner, especially in Washington. Says that women in Brockton need increased safety: we need to stop the increased violence against women that is often seen in the news. Elders need better housing and safety, especially public housing that move them away from dangerous populations such as drug addicts. Talks about elder abuse and neglect. For older people who want to leave abusive situations, there are not many options, in women's shelters it isn't as appropriate for a 70 year old woman to come in. Elderly are the fastest growing population, no one is prepared for this. Many issues that are facing young people such as HIV and drug abuse are now affecting elders: teens and elders are the highest populations HIV infected.

24:00

Noelle Foye

- Talks about survey given out in Brockton regarding women's needs in Brockton. Economic issues were the most pressing according to the survey, including affordable housing, affordable child care, and the opportunity to work and support their families. The second most pressing area had to do with public safety for women in Brockton, i.e. ensuring women feel safe in the city as well as safety in the home with regards to domestic violence.

26:00

Mablene Bennett

- Talks about how she would like to see more programs/activities in the community that include young girls because "that's where it all starts." Currently there is a program for young girls going into 8th grade to have tea at the end of the year with older women who talk to them about what they're doing and what they want to do. We should not wait until girls are teens or in college, but rather in 4th and 5th grade when they're young. Talks about crime watch in Brockton, which used to be one of the biggest crime watches in the country. Crime watch has done a lot in preventing crime among the elderly and young people. Says that crime watch cannot specifically stop shootings, where people tend to blame crime watch for failing to stop those crimes. No one can physically stop a shooting, rather reporting suspicious activity can help prevent crimes before they occur. Talks about bereavement groups for widows and how many communities would benefit from them.

32:00

Anne V.

- Wants to remember women's veterans. Talks about how a women's center was opened at the VA medical hospital that cater to female veterans. Says that women veterans have gone through many situations that are not talked about. Women may return home to the US after wars like Iraq but may not necessarily be in a "safe place." Would like to see more research about autoimmune deficiencies that are increasingly being diagnosed in women.

35:00

Barbara Duffy

- Very concerned about inadequate child care in MA. More and more women are entering the work force, about 70% of college applicants in 2012 were female. With her own children, she barely had a maternal leave. Child workers are paid horrible wages, the

people we trust most to look after our own children. MA needs to update the archaic system of child care that is currently in place.