



## Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women

### Annual Report 2024

#### Commissioners as of June 1, 2024

Amy Peters, Mashpee; Chinna Mapp, Secretary, Falmouth; Janell Burley Hofmann, Sandwich; Lynne Barbee, Chair, Mashpee; Mary Kate Gallagher, Vice Chair, Yarmouth Port; Mary Waygan, Treasurer, Mashpee; Natalia Albino-Frois, Hyannis; Rachel Larson Devine, Nantucket; Sunny Daily, Nantucket.

#### Commissioners who left/retired/moved as of 12/31/2023

Linda Cebula, Terry Alves-Hunter, Sue Mynttinen, Joanna McCarthy

#### **Mission**

The mission of the Cape Cod & Islands Commission is to provide a permanent, effective voice for women across the Cape & Islands. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights and the full enjoyment of life for all women throughout their lives.

The purpose of the Commission is to advance women toward full equity in all areas of life and promote rights and opportunities for all women. To help achieve this, the Commission will:

- Study, review and report on the status of women in Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket Counties
- Inform leaders of business, education, health care, state and local governments and the media
- Serve as a liaison between the Massachusetts Commission and Cape Cod & Islands Commission, and other government and community groups
- Promote and facilitate collaboration among women's commissions and organizations
- Consult with executive and legislative bodies on the effect of legislation and policies on women

The Commission may hold hearings, conduct surveys, listening sessions or use other communication strategies to provide a voice and address the needs of women.

To facilitate our work, the CCICSW convened on a monthly basis and also in working groups: Legislative, Hearing More Voices, and Publicity.

#### **Advocacy**

The Cape Cod & Islands Commission was engaged in significant legislative advocacy for the 2023-2024 State legislative session, the 193rd General Court. The following are our Legislative Priorities:

#### **The I Am Bill (H.534) An Act to increase access to disposable menstrual products.**

The I AM bill would provide access to free menstrual products to all menstruating individuals in schools, shelters & prisons.

#### **Health Youth (S.268) An Act relative to healthy youth.**

The Healthy Youth Act will ensure that Massachusetts schools that offer sex ed courses teach a scientifically accurate curriculum that features age-appropriate information. Parents shall be notified of these programs ahead of time and may withdraw a student from the program.



**Doula Services (H.1240 S.782) An Act relative to Medicaid coverage for doula services**

Ensure that the Medicaid system administered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts shall provide coverage of doula services to pregnant individuals and postpartum individuals

**Common Start (H.489, S.301) An Act providing affordable and accessible high-quality early education and care to promote child development and well-being and support the economy in the Commonwealth.**

The Common Start legislative framework uses a combination of direct-to-provider operational funding and family financial assistance to reduce costs to families while compensating providers for the true cost of providing quality care.

**No Cost Sharing (S.647) An Act relative to preserving preventive services without cost sharing.**

The provision would require insurance plans to cover critical preventive services like immunizations (including preventative HIV medicines), cancer screenings, and well-woman visits, including birth control, with no copayments, coinsurance, or deductibles.

Commissioners reviewed a range of possible legislation, and selected these five bills for our focus after detailed consideration and study. We included representatives addressing doula services and common start bills in one of our monthly meetings.

We sent letters of support for the CCICSW Legislative priorities to:

Committee Members Senator Friedman, Representatives Lawn and O'Neill, of the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing; and to Committee Members Senators Lewis and Burke, Representatives Garlick, and Schwartz of the Joint Committee on Education. Duplicate letters were also sent to our Cape & Islands Delegation: Senators Moran and Cyr; Representatives Peake, Xiarhos, Fernandes, Vieira, Diggs and Flanagan.

Commissioners attended two League of Women Voters gatherings this Spring to meet and hear from members of the Cape & Islands Delegation. We raised the issue with the LWV about co-hosting a non-partisan event for State Legislative candidates in the Fall.

**Programming**

We had limited programming in 2024, instead focusing on recruitment of new commissioners, transition of officers, and training/certifying all new and renewing members, and submitting a grant proposal. Commissioner Mapp attended the Regional Convening and gave the Report.

We are in the process of setting up an internship for the summer with a student at Mashpee High School. Her focus will include a listening circle for young women, and the "period poverty" survey launched by the Metro West Athena Council. This project will include translation of the survey into Spanish and Portuguese, and outreach to other local schools.

Our outreach/education work includes the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Event Honoring Missing and Murdered Indigenous People, (May 5, Mashpee); the Open Streets of Hyannis (May 19, Hyannis); the Public Health Community Outreach (June 6, Mashpee); Racial Amity Day (June 9, Mashpee).



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Several Commissioners will be trained on media equipment at local TV outlets for future events.

Commissioner Daily, a trained Doula, was an expert for a Legislative Hearing in May. In support of the Common Start Bill we joined the Common Start Coalition and attended their convening on January 10, 2024 to support the call of action to address the childcare crisis.

Commissioners also attended two League of Women Voters gatherings this Spring to meet and hear from members of the Cape & Islands Delegation. We raised the issue with the LWV about co-hosting a non-partisan event for State Legislative candidates in the Fall.

**Goals for the coming year include:**

- Continue our legislative work, the CCICSW plans to review and study new legislation submitted to the 194<sup>th</sup> General Court, establish legislative priorities, and participate in activities supporting the passage of the priority legislation. As in the past, we may invite members of our legislative delegation to attend and speak at one of our monthly meetings,
- Coordinate these efforts, if possible, with the League of Women Voters of Cape Cod and Falmouth and participate their meeting and forums with the region's legislators and candidates for state senator and representative.
- Hearing more voices work, including holding at least one listening session to garner the views and opinions of residents on the pressing issues and needs of our the region's women and girls, and host one educational event with a guest speaker addressing one of these issues in depth.
- Continue our publicity work, by using our Face Book page for outreach, and continue hosting information tables at community events.
- Additional recruitment to attain a full 13 members, with the widest possible geographic, racial, ethnic and age representation. This will include promotional/advertising work in new outlets.
- Development of a young women/girls listening circle and the circulation of the survey on period poverty. This will include establishing contacts with schools and community groups.
- Strengthening and expanding relations with other Cape & Island organizations, including the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, women's health groups (e.g. doulas), youth, student and immigrant groups.
- Using skills in media to expand outreach, education and documentation of our work. This will include membership in local TV and establishing relations with print and radio media.

- Administrative work, including review of by-laws, translation/interpretation into Portuguese and Spanish of essential documents and events. Updating materials with the new logo.

**Submitted by Lynne Barbee, Chair, May 20, 2024**