



Hampshire Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

Annual Report 2023

Commissioners: Marcia Plant Jackson, Chair, (Leverett); Laura Sylvester, Vice Chair (Shutesbury); Victoria Cliche, Clerk / additional role of Co-Chair in April, May and June, (Leverett); Jennifer Ortiz, Treasurer (S. Hadley); Bonnie MacCracken (Amherst); Marie McCourt, (Granby); Patricia Crosby (Gill).

Mission:

The purpose of the Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls (HFCSWG) shall be to advance women and girls toward full equity in all areas of life and to promote the rights and opportunities for all women and girls.

The mission of the Commission on the Status of Women and Girls is to amplify the voices of women and girls (being all those who self-identify as such, regardless of the gender they were designated at birth) across Hampshire-Franklin Counties that facilitates and fosters community, inclusiveness, and well-being for women and girls. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the full enjoyment of life for all women and girls across all lifespans.

Advocacy:

Franklin and Hampshire Counties are among the poorest in Massachusetts. Although there is great rural beauty, resources and work opportunities are limited and contribute to poverty and desolation. Many towns lack internet and /or cell phone access as well as sufficient access to public transportation as it is greatly limited. Even with the pandemic officially over, our area continues to struggle with problems of food insecurity, access to social services, and poverty more generally.

We will be visiting our representatives in the State House May 31 for Women's Advocacy Day, to support the priority bills of the State Commission, and additionally to advocate for passage of bills of significance to our region. These include:

- An Act Establishing a Diaper Benefits Program
- An Act to Increase Access to Disposable Menstrual Products
- An Act Relative to Universal School Meals
- An Act Establishing the Hunger Free Campus Initiative
- An Act Relative to Hormonal Contraceptives (increasing access in pharmacies)

- An Act Relative to Insurance Coverage for Doula Services and Expanding Doula Training

Programming:

- Hosted a table at the Smith College Jandon Opportunity Fair in September so as to secure an intern for the Fall, distribute the Resource Guide and expand community connections.
- Attended Lindsey Sabadosa's Bill Signing in February.
- Participated in the Menstrual Equity Summit run by the Massachusetts Equity Coalition and signed up as a partner in March.
- Participated in Domestic Violence March organized by students at Ware HS.
- Attended planning meeting for Northampton Youth Commission Hearing on Female and Female Identifying Youth to be held in the Fall.
- Hosted a table at the Five Colleges Queer and Gender and Sexuality Conference held at Hampshire College and administered a survey for the local LGBTQIA+ Community as developed with the MCSW.
- Planned two listening sessions for the LGBTQIA+ community with representatives of the MCSW:
 - The June 7th session is being hosted by our Smith College Jandon Center partner and welcomes all ages.
 - The upcoming virtual session targets issues faced by seniors and will be conducted in partnership with the Rainbow Elders.
- Worked with a Smith College intern to establish a database contact list of all organizations and resources compiled in the Resource Guide for our region which will be distributed in June.

Goals for the next fiscal year

1. Recruit new commissioners so that we have a full commission of 9 members. We are on the way to meeting this goal, with 2 very viable candidates in the process of being appointed.
2. Increase our social media presence by establishing and filling a Social Media Internship with a student interested in communications and/or marketing and assigning a Commission to act as a mentor and support.
3. Continue to build strong local partnerships where mutual goals are furthered. Specifically continue to build upon the relationship established with Smith College and identify one additional partnership.

4. Build even stronger partnership with State Legislators and leverage those relationships to support community change.
5. In collaboration with community partners, create a sense of culture of kinship, promoting rights and opportunities for all women and girls through virtual and in person events.

Submitted by Marcia Plant-Jackson and Victoria Cliche