



Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

ANNUAL REPORT

May 2024

Members:

Sasha N. Viands – Springfield
Magdalena Gomez – Springfield
Jazmine Cotto -Springfield
Nicole Esposito – Longmeadow
Jacqueline Velez – Springfield
Nicole D. Coakley – Springfield
Cori Rolland – Southwick
Jennifer R. McNeill – West Springfield
Ariana Nunez—Springfield

Elected Officers:

Nicole D. Coakley—Chair
Sasha N. Viands —Secretary
Jazmine Cotto —Vice Chair

Purpose

On April 25, 2017, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women inaugurated nine new commissioners to a newly formed regional commission created to study and report on the status of women and girls in the twenty-three towns and cities that make up Hampden County, Western Massachusetts. “The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women is a state-established body charged with reviewing the status of women in Massachusetts and offering recommendations regarding policy that would improve access to opportunities and equality.” Taking from the brief provided, the Regional Commissions: “Modeled after the MCSW, the...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.”

Membership

At the September 19, 2023 meeting, the HCCSWG voted for three (3) elected officers at which time the following assignments were accepted – Nicole D. Coakley, Chair; Sasha N. Viands, Secretary; Jazmine

Cotto, Vice Chair. In January 2024, the Commission inaugurated three new officers including; Ariana Nunez, Magdalena Gomez, and Jennifer McNeil. In April 2024, the Commission also inaugurated two new officers including Nicole Esposito of Longmeadow and Cori Rolland of Southwick.

Accomplishments

The HCCSWG Commission has successfully completed a few meaningful list of accomplishments between May 2023 to May 2024. This year, the commission still saw struggles with membership participation and commitment. Despite our struggling membership numbers, we managed to have some meaningful meetings, events, and participation from community members. Some accomplishment of note is our collaboration with many organizations, like Movie Groupies 413, India Anderson and IGN Company, and Art for the Soul Gallery. Collaboration with Movie Groupies 413 allowed the Commission to secure 95 seats for mothers and daughters to see “Madame Web” and hear from guest speakers, such as the Trailblazing TrioZ of Zeta Phi Beta, Councilor Malo Brown, and Mrs. Lopez M. Lucinda, who all spoke about women empowerment and ways to support each other. Commissioners and families engaged in a lively conversation and relaxation exercise. At the start of the new year, our Commission collaborated with India Anderson and ING Company to begin planning our annual Women’s History Month event. The 2024 Theme was “ Women Empowerment,”. This was an in-person event that highlighted women and girls, and women owned organizations and businesses. Guest speaker Dr. Arlela Bethal, who opened a unique therapy practice in the community called; The Movement LAB. The Movement LAB is a business entity that offers group sessions in Dance Movement Therapy (DMT). Dance Movement Therapy is a therapeutic intervention that is meant to treat symptoms of depression, anxiety, manage stress, and other mental health symptoms in a group setting.

Another highlight this year was our April participation in GELI conference this year. It was our pleasure to help plan for this event, coordinate with the state commission transportation in Western MA. We continued to have an active role this year with GELI. But with our successes, we faced several resignations of our new members and existing members of tenure, which really slowed our progress and dwindled our numbers to only six active Commissioners. We are have interviewed and hoping that the commission will be back to full capacity by June 2024. This year into 2025, our Commission will continue to work on pushing the following bills: The I AM Bill, The I AM Bill, Voter Access Bill, Child Care Bill, Prison Moratorium Bill, and Rent Stabilization Bill. We look forward to the many opportunities in the future to support, provide resources and push for legislation about important issues that impact women and girls in Hampden County and beyond.

Community Events

Triumph Over Trauma “A personal journey to mental wellness” (April 2024)

Women’s History Month Celebration (March 2024)

GELI Conference (April 2024)

Mother Daughter Movie (June 2023)

HCCSWG Commissioners also invited a series of women who lead in our community to serve as featured guests and present important information to our constituents during our monthly Public Meetings on a quarterly basis.

HCCSWG Grant Request from the State Commission

The HCCSWG submitted a request for grant funding from the MA Commission in January 2024. We used some of those funds to cover expenses at our Women's History Month event, and Triumph Over Trauma event. The remainder of the funds will be used to purchase swag and a June Hampden County Hearing to hear from our women and girls in the region to plan future events and advocacy. With COVID regulations lifted and hybrid model meetings extended until 2025 we anticipate the turnout for these vents to be equal or more to that of our Women's History Month event.

Conclusion

The Hampden County Commission is quite proud of our work during the past year despite our membership challenges, we have worked diligently to engage with our community, participate in local initiatives, coordinate opportunities to connect and work with State Commission for public hearings and collect information to guide our efforts. We plan to build on our successful events earlier this year and grow our Commission's membership back with new faces from new communities in our county. We look forward to the new ideas and new energy additional Commissioners bring and learning from the June events we have planned with Legislators and the Community.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicole D. Coakley, Chair

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