



# **Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls**

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**May 2025**

### **Members:**

Sasha N. Viands – Springfield  
Magdalena Gomez – Springfield  
Nicole Esposito – Longmeadow  
Nicole D. Coakley – Springfield  
Cori Rolland – Southwick  
Jennifer R. McNeill – West Springfield  
Vanessa Martinez - Holyoke  
Ariana Nunez—Springfield

### **Elected Officers:**

Nicole D. Coakley—Chair  
Vanessa Martinez —Secretary  
Cori Rolland —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:**

The HCCSWG voted for three (3) elected officers at which time the following assignments were accepted – Nicole D. Coakley, Chair; Cori Rolland, Vice Chair; Vanessa Martinez, Secretary. The commission is fully staffed with nine seated commissioners.

**The Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls (HCCSWG) achieved several significant accomplishments between May 2024 and May 2025, despite ongoing challenges with member participation and commitment.**

**Key Accomplishments:**

- **Collaborations:** The commission actively partnered with numerous Hampden County organizations, including:
  - Power of the Purse event with the Dora D. Robinson Women's Leadership Council and United Way of Pioneer Valley.
  - "A Mother's Story: Grounding Allies for Women and Girls Advocacy" virtual event.
  - Homeless Women and Girls menstrual product distribution with the Western Mass Care Solutions Christmas Popup Potluck.
  - Movie matinee and lecture of "The Six Triple Eight" with Primus Mason Clean Energy Workforce Development and Power Medical Staffing.
  - Business Before Pleasure Women Empowerment Initiative event with Breaking the Core and O'Dell Women's Center.
- **Guest Speakers:** The "Grounding Allies for Women and Girls Advocacy" virtual event featured male allies Cory Houston (Breaking the CORE), Ra-Born Allah (All In All Luxe), and Donny Wright (Innervision Empowerment), who shared their mothers' stories and their commitment to advocating for legislative priorities affecting women and girls.
- **Women Who Lead: The Hoops and the Highlights:** The May virtual event will feature dynamic women leaders Bexie Starks (CEO of Pathway 2 Purpose), Odessa Perkins (CEO and Founder of emPOWERment Dess Perkins Foundation), and Caroline Ritter (Lead for Springfield Women with a Purpose).
- **GELI Conference:** The HCCSWG actively participated in and helped plan the GELI conference in April, coordinating transportation in Western MA.

**Challenges:**

- The commission experienced several resignations from both new and existing members. Recruitment efforts are underway, with the goal of reaching full capacity by August 2025.

**Legislative Priorities for 2025-2026:**

The Commission will continue to advocate for the following bills:

- An Act to increase access to disposable menstrual products (IAM Bill).
- An Act to prevent human trafficking through increased public awareness.
- An Act establishing community fridges to address food insecurity.

- An Act to provide reproductive health care to incarcerated individuals.
- An Act creating a Disproportionate Share Childcare Provider Fund.

Looking ahead, the HCCSWG remains dedicated to supporting women and girls in Hampden County and beyond through resources, advocacy, and legislative efforts on critical issues.

### **Community Events**

- Power of the Purse (October 2024)
- Mother's Story: Grounding Allies for Women and Girl's Advocacy (December 2024)
- Homeless Women and Girls menstrual distribution Potluck (December 2024)
- Women and girl's movie matinee and lecture viewing of "The Six Triple Eight" (January 2025)
- Business Before Pleasure Women Empowerment Initiative (February 2025)
- GELI Conference (April 2025)
- Women Who Lead: The Hoops and the Highlights (May 2025)
- Legislative Breakfast (June 2025)

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 May 2024 (fall funding) and December 2024 (spring funding). We used some of those funds to cover expenses at our Power of the Purse collaboration with Dora D. Robinson Women's Leadership Council and United Way of Pioneer Valley event, A Mother's Story: Grounding Allies for Women and Girls Advocacy Virtual event, Homeless Women and Girls menstrual distribution collaboration with Western Mass Care Solutions Christmas Popup Potluck event, Women and girls movie matinee and lecture viewing of "The Six Triple Eight" in collaboration with Primus Mason Clean Energy Workforce Development and Power Medical Staffing event, Business Before Pleasure Women Empowerment Initiative event collaboration with Breaking the Core and O'Dell Women's Center. The remainder of the funds was used to purchase swag and marketing materials – and to cover expenses for our May 2025 Women Who Lead virtual event and a June Hampden County Legislative Breakfast.

### **Conclusion**

Despite membership challenges this past year, the Hampden County Commission is proud of its diligent work engaging with the community, participating in local initiatives, coordinating with the State Commission for public hearings, and gathering information to guide our efforts. We aim to expand on our successful events from earlier this year and rebuild our Commission's membership with new individuals from diverse communities within the county. We anticipate

the fresh perspectives and energy that additional Commissioners will bring and look forward to learning from the upcoming May and June events planned with Legislators and the Community.

Respectfully Submitted,

**Nicole D. Coakley, Chair**

**Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls**