



## Eastern Regional Commission on the Status of Women (ERCSW)

### Annual Report

2026

#### Commissioners

- Chair: Wanjiku Gachugi, West Roxbury
- Vice-Chair: Tia Washington\*, Mattapan
- Treasurer: Camille Cramer, Lower Mills Dorchester
- Clerk: Amanda Crabb, Quincy
- Rosa Hanks, Chelsea
- Kashawna Harling\*, Malden
- Connie Henderson, Boston (Back Bay)
- Donna Lubrano\*, Boston (North End)

*\*Denotes new Commissioners joining the body in February 2026*

#### Mission

Our mission directs the body to provide a permanent, effective voice for women and girls across the Eastern Region of Massachusetts. The Commission assesses and advances women toward full equity in all areas of life. Our Purpose is to assess the status of women and girls within the Eastern Region, advance equity and promote rights and opportunities, and provide recommendations to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW).

#### Advocacy

Our advocacy reflects our legislative priorities to champion systemic equity, human dignity, and fundamental protections for vulnerable communities across the Commonwealth. These bills work together to address critical gaps in our current systems by targeting legal abuse, medical vulnerability, public underrepresentation, and the lack of basic healthcare access. Ultimately, the legislative priorities that ERCSW has opted to focus on offer essential protections that secure personal autonomy and ensure public institutions fairly represent and care for everyone.

- **Bill 1: An Act relative to controlling and abusive litigation (S.1205/H.1594)**

This bill establishes crucial legal protections to prevent abusers from utilizing legal systems and

vexatious litigation as a continuing mechanism of coercive control. It aims to protect survivors from the financial and emotional distress caused by ongoing legal manipulation.

- **Bill 2: An Act to increase access to disposable menstrual products (The IAM Bill) (S.1549/H.2483)**

This legislation mandates the provision of free, reliable access to disposable menstrual hygiene products across all public schools, emergency shelters, and correctional institutions. It addresses menstrual equity by ensuring that basic healthcare necessities are available to vulnerable populations.

- **Bill 3: An Act to ensure gender parity and racial and ethnic diversity on public boards and commissions (S.2160/H.3398)**

This bill enforces statutory composition rules requiring that public appointed boards and commissions mirror the true racial, ethnic, and gender demographics of the Commonwealth. It targets systemic underrepresentation to ensure diverse perspectives guide public decision-making processes.

- **Bill 4: An Act providing for safe and consensual sensitive examinations (S.1485/H.2401)**

This measure explicitly prohibits medical professionals from conducting pelvic or sensitive examinations on unconscious or anesthetized patients without direct, explicit prior written consent. It also grants patients the statutory right to have a third-party witness present during such examinations.

### **Programming & Outreach**

To build a strong foundation, we updated our bylaws, recruited new commissioners, and hired our first intern. While strategic organizing sessions, such as our recent meeting in Quincy, solidify our direction, capacity constraints, limited funds, and financial inflexibility continue to challenge us. Because our budget is small and restricted to specific, anticipated projects, securing additional, unrestricted funding remains vital to maximizing our advocacy, ensuring we can respond to unexpected needs, and expanding our community impact.

Our collective impact is evident in our successful hosting of the "Abusive Litigation Briefing" for over 50 participants. Together with four partner organizations, we put this event together in just two weeks. The briefing focused on legal gaps created by abusive litigation, which is a form of coercive control and post-separation abuse. Most importantly, survivors shared firsthand how these court proceedings damage lives. Their stories grounded our legal analysis in real-world experiences and showed why we urgently need systemic reform. Alongside these internal efforts, we lead the Parity on Boards Coalition, coordinating a network of 10 organizations to advocate for parity on public Massachusetts boards and commissions.

### **Goals for the Next Fiscal Year**

- **Goal 1: Institutional Sustainability and Capacity**

Prioritize building a strong foundation by maintaining a full commission of nine members. To ensure long-term stability and compliance, which includes refining our operational bylaws for

open meeting law alignment and creating structured training for onboarding new commissioners as well as providing a refresher for current commissioners.

- **Goal 2: Community Outreach and Impact**

Drive meaningful community engagement by organizing collaborative events, tabling at a variety of regional gatherings, and hosting legislative events with elected officials. A central focus of this outreach will be advocating for gender parity on public boards.

- **Goal 3: Strategic Visibility**

We are actively expanding our presence by using social media to market events and highlight regional concerns, a primary focus for our intern. To broaden our collective impact, we are deepening our partnerships with the Chelsea, Boston, and Brookline Women's Commissions.

*\*Submitted by ERCSW Chair Wanjiku Gachugi on May 20, 2026*