



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

# TRANS GIRLS AND WOMEN VIRTUAL LISTENING SESSION

Listening Session for Trans Women and Girls  
February 26, 2026  
VIRTUAL

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## Executive Summary

Every year, the Commission holds multiple public hearings, listening sessions, and other events that offer an opportunity to hear directly from women and girls around the Commonwealth. The purpose of a public hearing is to give community stakeholders the opportunity to discuss issues and concerns important to women, as well as the gaps or barriers they have experienced in the provision of services available from anywhere in the Commonwealth. The information collected influences the MCSW's advocacy and legislative priorities. Public Hearings help the MCSW effectively provide a permanent, effective voice for women across MA.

This hearing was hosted as a virtual event, with all participants joining virtually on Zoom. The listening session was guided with questions and polls given by staff members, allowing attendees to speak for 1-2 minutes. The MCSW also hosted American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters.

## Key Takeaways

### **Participant – Suffolk County / Marsha P. Johnson Institute**

Liberation is increasing trans representation in leadership and higher education while building confidence and self-advocacy among trans youth. She emphasizes that support programs providing housing, healthcare, and career pathways are life-saving, but remain severely underfunded.

### **Participant – Berkshire County/ Seeing Rainbows**

The participant frames liberation as the ability for trans people to live in abundance, not just survive, and highlights the harm caused by widespread cancellations of gender-affirming care for both adults and youth. They stress that housing is the most urgent need and call for more proactive, rather than reactive, systems of support.

### **Participant – Hampshire County / Transhealth**

Liberation is collective and requires intersectional solidarity, emphasizing that “no one is free until we are all free.” She identifies disconnection across movements and restrictive healthcare policies, such as MassHealth limitations, as major barriers, and calls for systemic reform grounded in bodily autonomy and shared struggle.



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**Participant – Plymouth County / Health Imperatives**

Liberation as the ability to exist safely, with stable housing and reliable access to healthcare. She highlights the growing fear and instability trans individuals face, especially as youth support systems become less accessible and medical care feels increasingly uncertain

**Participant– Hampden County/ Safe Passage & PrideXtended**

The most pressing needs within the trans community are housing, transportation, and food security. She advocates for cross-state collaboration and sustainable funding while underscoring the importance of community care and small acts of recognition that affirm trans people's humanity

**Participant – Suffolk County / Marsha P. Johnson Institute**

Liberation cannot be achieved without prioritizing the most vulnerable, particularly Black and Brown trans women. She highlights the severe lack of housing, healthcare, and funding, criticizing current financial support as insufficient and urging the state to make meaningful investments in trans communities.

**Participant – Suffolk County/ Queer History Boston**

Liberation includes an internal sense of freedom rooted in authenticity and self-expression. While celebrating this uniquely human experience, they also stress the necessity of structural and material support, particularly in uplifting trans women of color who sustain the community.

**Participant – Essex County / Transhealth**

Liberation is recognizing the joy, power, and leadership of trans people, especially trans women. He emphasizes the importance of representation and community support, noting how trans women of color played a crucial role in guiding his own identity journey.

**Participant – Hampden County / Transhealth**

Liberation is rooted in solidarity, drawing parallels to collective movements like labor organizing. She raises urgent concerns about mental health crises resulting from canceled surgeries and advocates for stronger unions and community-based protections for trans individuals.

**Participant – Bristol County/ Dream Out Loud Center**

Highlights systemic exclusion, particularly the absence of LGBTQ+ data in the census, which impacts funding and resource allocation. She calls for structural reform and expresses hope through youth advocacy and the resilience of marginalized communities.

**Giselle Byrd – Suffolk County/ The Theater Offensive and MCSW**

Reflected on persistent discrimination and inequities, even in progressive environments, and stresses the need for stronger cross-state support systems. She underscores the life-saving importance of gender-affirming care and the urgency of addressing violence and disparities affecting trans women.

**Participant – Middlesex County**

Access to gender-affirming care at a young age significantly improved her quality of life, emphasizing how critical early access is for trans youth to experience hope and well-being.



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## Conclusion

Across counties and organizations, participants converged on a shared vision of liberation, one that extends far beyond survival to encompass abundance, safety, authenticity, and full participation in civic and community life. While each voice brought a distinct perspective, several urgent and overlapping themes emerged that carry clear implications for policy and investment.

**Housing, Healthcare, and Basic Needs** stood out as the most consistently cited, life-or-death priorities. Participants described a landscape of severe underfunding, program cancellations, and growing instability, particularly for trans women of color and trans youth. The cancellation or restriction of gender-affirming care was identified as a direct driver of mental health crises, and early access to such care was highlighted as transformative for young people's well-being and hope.

**Intersectionality and Equity** were central to how participants defined liberation. Multiple voices stressed that trans liberation cannot be separated from racial justice, economic justice, or disability justice. Black and Brown trans women were specifically named as the most underserved and most at risk, and participants called on the state to center these communities in funding decisions and program design.

**Systemic and Structural Reform** was a recurring call, from expanding MassHealth coverage, to addressing the exclusion of LGBTQ+ people from census data that directly affects resource allocation, to building proactive rather than reactive support systems. Participants emphasized that community care and small acts of recognition matter, but cannot substitute for institutional accountability.

**Solidarity and Cross-Movement Collaboration** emerged as both a value and a strategy. Participants drew parallels to labor organizing, called for cross-state partnerships, and emphasized that disconnection across movements weakens collective power. Sustainable, long-term funding rather than piecemeal grants was identified as essential to building lasting infrastructure.

**Representation and Leadership** were framed as inseparable from liberation. Increasing trans visibility in higher education, government, and community leadership was seen as both a goal and a means of generating the confidence and self-advocacy that sustains communities over time.

### Areas to Consider for Policy Impact:

- Expand and protect access to gender-affirming care for youth and adults under MassHealth and state-funded programs
- Increase dedicated, sustainable funding for trans-led housing, healthcare, and wraparound services
- Center Black and Brown trans women in resource allocation and program design
- Advocate for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ identity data in census and state data collection systems
- Support cross-agency and cross-state collaboration to reduce gaps in transportation, food security, and social services
- Invest in trans representation in leadership pipelines and educational institutions



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- Fund mental health supports specifically tailored to the trans community, including those affected by surgical and care cancellations

These voices collectively make clear that the path forward requires not only compassion, but structural investment, intersectional solidarity, and a willingness to prioritize those who have been most systematically excluded.

## About the MCSW

The MCSW is an independent state agency that was legislatively created in 1998 to advance women of the Commonwealth to full equality in all areas of life and to promote their rights and opportunities. The Commission provides a permanent, effective voice for Massachusetts women and is comprised of 19 diverse members who are appointed by the Governor, Senate President, Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Caucus of Women Legislators. Commissioners serve in a voluntary capacity and the work of the Commission is facilitated by a staff of seven, assisted by year-round interns.

The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights and the full enjoyment of life for all women and girls throughout their lives. For more than 28 years now, the Commission and our regional bodies have worked to advance the rights and opportunities of all women and girls across Massachusetts, and advance an inclusive environment for everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, color, sex, age, disability (seen and unseen), genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, parental status, marital status, socioeconomic status or background.

## Attendees

### Regional Commissions Represented

Berkshire County Commission on the Status of Women

### Participating Organizations

Dana Hall School  
Brown Brothers Harriman  
Dream Out Loud Center  
Health Imperatives  
IASTE Local 11  
Marsha P. Johnson Institute  
PrideXtended  
Queer History Boston  
Rainbow Knights  
Safe Passage  
Smith College  
T4Transhealth Workers Union  
The Theater Offensive  
Trans Resistance MA  
Transhealth



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UAW Local 2322  
Wellesley Public Schools  
YW Boston

**MCSW Commissioners**

Christine Monska  
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Tanisha Arena  
Giselle Byrd  
Carol Campbell  
Guimel DeCarvalho  
Aisha Miller  
Lise Olney  
Heather Panahi

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