



Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women

BYLAWS

**Updated and approved – May 21, 2026*

PREAMBLE

Pursuant to Session General Laws of Massachusetts, Chapter 106, of the Acts of 2013, the organization and rules of procedure of the Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women shall be as follows:

ARTICLE I – NAME

The name of this organization shall be the Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women.

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

The purpose of the Commission shall be to advance women and girls toward full equity in all areas of life and to promote rights and opportunities for all women and girls. The mission of the Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls is to provide a permanent, effective voice for women and girls across Worcester County that facilitates and fosters community and inclusiveness among women. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights and the full enjoyment of life for all women and girls throughout their lives. The Commission shall have the following responsibilities:

- a) Study, review and report on the status of women and girls in the county;
- b) Inform leaders of business, education, health care, state and local governments and the communications media of issues pertaining to women and girls;
- c) Serve as a liaison between government and community groups concerned with issues affecting women and girls;
- d) Serve as a clearinghouse for information on issues pertaining to women and girls;
- e) Identify and recommend qualified women for appointive positions on levels of government, business and local institutions including boards and Commissions, as the

- Commission deems necessary and appropriate;
- f) Address programs and practices in all state and local agencies as they affect women and girls, as the Commission deems necessary and appropriate;
 - g) Consult with executive and legislative bodies on the effect on women and girls of proposed legislation, as the Commission deems necessary and appropriate;
 - h) Promote and facilitate collaboration among local women and girls organizations in Worcester County as the Commission deems necessary and appropriate; and
 - i) Provide an avenue to liaison between the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women and the Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women.

ARTICLE III – REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The Commission shall annually, on or before May 15, report the results of its findings and activities of the preceding year and its recommendations to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women.

ARTICLE IV – POWERS OF THE COMMISSION

The powers of the Commission shall include but not be limited to the following:

- a) To advise and submit recommendations and policies to the legislature and agencies, and officers of the state and local subdivisions of government on issues relating to women and girls;
- b) To collaborate with concerned organizations, groups and state departments on issues of common concern using such voluntary and uncompensated services of private individuals, as may be needed;
- c) To enact bylaws for its own governance;
- d) To hold regular, public meetings and to hold fact-finding hearings and other public forms as it may deem necessary; and

The Commission may request from agencies such information and assistance as the Commission may require.

ARTICLE V – MEMBERS

SECTION 1. MEMBERS

The members of the Worcester County Commission shall consist of nine members who are appointed by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women from a pool of applicants who reside in Worcester County and shall be appointed for random one, two, and three-year terms based on the current vacancies.

SECTION 2. DIVERSITY

Members of the Commission shall be drawn from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, sexual orientation, and socio-economic backgrounds from throughout Worcester County and shall have

had experience working toward the improvement of the status of women and girls in society.

SECTION 3. TERMS OF OFFICE

Members shall serve a term of three years or the term that was assigned to her based on the seat she filled - and until her successor is appointed. Each Commissioner is eligible to serve two consecutive three-year terms.

SECTION 4. VACANCIES

Any Commissioner may resign by delivering her written resignation to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women and copying her Chair. The Massachusetts Commission will have the authority to fill the vacancy with a new Commissioner for the balance of the unexpired term.

SECTION 5. APPOINTMENTS

Applications shall be solicited on a rolling basis throughout the year for appointment consideration during the annual appointment period which opens in September of every year or during any time at which the Commission has a vacancy. The Commission will send its appointment recommendations to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, which is the appointing authority. The appointments will be made with staggering terms that match the needs of the Commission.

Appointments shall begin January 1 of each year if filling an expired term, or on a date determined by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women if filling an unexpired term.

ARTICLE VI – FINANCES

SECTION 1. FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the Commission shall be July 1 through June 30.

SECTION 2. FUNDING

The Commission may accept and solicit funds, including any gifts, donations, grants or bequests, or any federal funds for any purposes of the enabling legislation.

SECTION 3. ACCOUNTS

Such funds shall be deposited in a separate account with the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women on behalf of the Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women and expended as directed by and in accordance with the law and the donor or grantor's intent.

ARTICLE VII – COMPENSATION AND LIABILITY

SECTION 1. COMPENSATION

The members of the Commission shall receive no direct compensation for their services, but shall be reimbursed for any usual and customary expenses incurred in the performance of their

duties.

SECTION 2. LIABILITY

No person who is now or who later becomes a member of the Commission shall be personally liable to its creditors for any indebtedness or liability, and any and all creditors of this Commission shall look to the assets of this Commission for payment.

ARTICLE VIII – OFFICERS

SECTION 1. OFFICERS

The Commission shall elect from among its members a Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and a Clerk, and any other officers it deems necessary. Only members of the Commission shall be eligible for nomination and election as Officers of the Commission. If an officer of this Commission shall, during her term of office, no longer be a member of the Commission, she shall automatically cease to be an officer of the Commissioner.

SECTION 2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Officers shall be elected annually at the last meeting of the fiscal year. The officers shall be elected by a majority of Commission members.

SECTION 3. OFFICERS' TERM OF OFFICE

The elected officers shall serve for a term of one (1) year. The elected officers shall not serve more than two (2) successive terms in any particular office. However, under extenuating circumstances, the Commission's Chair may serve a third consecutive one-year term.

SECTION 4. OFFICER VACANCIES

A vacancy in the Chair's office shall be filled until the next annual election by the Vice-Chair. All other vacancies shall be filled by a majority vote of the members of the Commission.

In the event the Chair and Vice-Chair are both unable to preside, a quorum of the Commission shall elect a temporary Chair.

ARTICLE IX – DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS

The duties of the officers are as follows:

SECTION 1. CHAIR

The Chair shall be entrusted to act and carry out policies and decisions of the Commission between meetings of the Commission. The Chair shall ensure that the legislative mandates of the Commission are carried out as prescribed by the Legislature and as formulated in these by-laws to:

- a) Call and preside over all meetings of the Commission and conduct these in accordance with parliamentary rules;

- b) Be an ex-officio (non-voting) member of all committees with the exception of the nominating committee;
- c) Call special meetings when deemed necessary or desirable;
- d) Set the agenda for the Commission;
- e) Serve as spokesperson for the Commission or direct such representation before the public and governmental bodies. Oversee all recommendations and reports to the Massachusetts Commission.
- f) Perform such other duties as the Commission may prescribe from time to time.
- g) Sign such instruments as shall be authorized by the Commission.

SECTION 2. VICE-CHAIR

The Vice-Chair shall perform all duties of the Chair in the event of the Chair's absence or inability to serve, or in the event of a vacancy in that office until it is filled and shall perform other duties as are designated by the Commission.

The regular role of Vice-Chair includes these responsibilities:

- a) Oversee orientation of new commissioners, ensuring that all commissioners are properly sworn in and maintain required training and certifications;
- b) Propose and facilitate new training for commissioners when appropriate, including bringing them up to speed on matters pertaining to the work and business of WCCSW;
- c) Serve as the Chair of an ad-hoc Bylaws Committee when amendments to the bylaws are being discussed and proposed for approval by the full commission.

SECTION 3. TREASURER

The Treasurer shall perform the following duties and all other duties as are designated by the Commission.

- a) Ensure that all financial records are maintained and shall oversee budget preparation and reporting.
- b) Submit the commission's application for fall and spring grant funding as provided by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women and manage all expenses related to the grant.
- c) Ensure that any commissioner seeking reimbursement for expenses has the proper paperwork completed and submitted to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women for processing.

SECTION 4. CLERK

The Clerk shall:

- a) Be responsible for writing and reviewing the minutes of all regular and special meetings of the Commission;
- b) Assure that copies of the minutes are sent to all members of the Commission and the Massachusetts Commission prior to the next meeting;
- c) Assure that an attendance roster is maintained for each Commission meeting and committee meeting;

- d) Act as historian to the Commission by assuring that all general correspondence, records of meetings and committees, and business before the Commission is maintained;
- e) Perform all other duties necessary for the maintenance of adequate records, files and communications of the Commission.

ARTICLE XI – COMMITTEES

SECTION 1. ORGANIZATION

The Commission may create such committees, as it deems necessary to carry out the work of the Commission.

SECTION 2. STANDING COMMITTEES

Standing Committees shall be established by the Commission with permanent on-going tasks. The work of the Standing Committees shall be determined by goals and objectives established annually. All committees shall submit their recommendations to the full Worcester County Commission for approval to be acted upon.

The Standing Committees shall include but not be limited to the following:

- a) Legislative & Public Policy Committee
- b) Program & Planning Committee
- c) Outreach Committee

All Committee Chairs shall be active Commissioners, and the standing committees shall be composed of members of the Commission. Every Commissioner shall serve on at least one committee. Commission members may volunteer to serve on the committee of their choice. Chairs of standing committees shall be selected by members of that committee and will act as the point of contact, delivering committee reports at full commission meetings.

SECTION 3. SPECIAL COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES

The Commission is empowered to appoint committees, task forces, councils, or other appropriate bodies, to study specialized areas of concern and report their findings to the Commission; disseminate information on issues relating to women and girls; develop and promote programs and services to women and girls; and advocate for women's equity.

Membership on such committees shall not be limited to Commissioners. Special representatives other than Commission members may be appointed by the Chair to serve on task forces for the period of time designated by the Commission and would submit interim reports on their special assignments as the Commission requests.

Only Commissioners may vote to elect special committee Chairs, and only Commissioners may be Chairs of special committees.

ARTICLE XII – MEETINGS

SECTION 1. SCHEDULE

The Commission shall meet at least six times during the calendar year. Meeting locations will rotate throughout Worcester County or be held remotely and shall be accessible in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A calendar of dates shall be set at the first meeting of the fiscal year. This calendar of dates shall be distributed to all Commissioners and can be amended by a majority vote of the Commission.

SECTION 2. QUORUM

A majority of Commissioners currently holding office shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of Commission business, unless it conflicts with the Open Meeting Law. In the absence of a quorum, the executive committee can act on behalf of the Commission on any matters deemed urgent, provided that a quorum of the executive committee is present.

SECTION 3. OPEN MEETING LAW

All meetings shall be conducted in compliance with the Open Meeting Law. Executive sessions, as per the law, may be conducted.

SECTION 4. SPECIAL MEETINGS

A special meeting of the Commission can be called by:

- a) The Chair; or
- b) A majority vote of the Commission.

The purpose of the meeting shall be stated in the call. No business can be transacted at the meeting except that stated in the call. Except in cases of emergency, at least three days notice must be given to the membership. A special meeting can be conducted if a quorum of the Commission is present.

SECTION 6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Observers may attend meetings of the Commission and may be granted the privilege of the floor at the discretion of the Chair and/or Commission members.

Normally, fifteen minutes will be set aside at the beginning of the meetings for this purpose. In addition, visitors may speak to specific issues as they arise during the meeting at the discretion of the Chair and the Commissioners.

SECTION 7. ATTENDANCE

All Commissioners are expected to maintain regular attendance at meetings of the full Commission, and to participate fully and effectively in such committees or task forces as are necessary and appropriate to conduct the business of the Commission.

It is an expectation of the commission that if a commissioner is unable to attend, that a notification will be sent to the Chair at their earliest convenience. The Clerk of the Commission shall maintain a record of attendance at each Commission meeting.

After a Commissioner's third absence from regularly scheduled meetings of the full Commission,

the Chair of the Commission shall notify the appointing authority, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, of the failure of that Commissioner to comply with the Commission's attendance requirements; provided, however, that such Commissioner may attach her own explanation for the reasons for her absences.

SECTION 8. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

A request for a leave of absence by a commissioner must be submitted in writing to the Chair of the Commission for consideration by the Executive Committee of Officers. A vote by the full Commission will be taken for acceptance of the Executive Committee's recommendation, noting that a Leave of Absence will be allowed for no longer than a three-month period and the absence must be justified. During this time, the Commissioner on leave will receive correspondence as to WCCSW happenings with attendance at the first meeting after Leave being mandatory.

ARTICLE XIII – VOTING PRIVILEGES

At any Commission meeting or committee meeting, each member of the Commission shall be entitled to one vote. There shall be no proxy voting.

ARTICLE XV – AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

These bylaws may be amended at any regular meeting of the Commission by a two-thirds vote of the Commissioners present and voting provided that the proposed amendment has been submitted at the previous meeting.

ARTICLE XVI – POLICY ADOPTION AND AMENDMENTS

The Commission, as needed, shall adopt policies. Policies may be adopted, amended, or repealed by a majority of all votes cast by the Commissioners present and voting, provided that the proposed material has been submitted at the previous meeting.

ARTICLE XVII – PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

When not in conflict with these bylaws, Robert's Rules of Order (Newly Revised) shall govern the actions of the Commission.

ARTICLE XVI: COMMISSIONER EMERITA

Any Commissioner who serves two full three-year terms is eligible to become a Commissioner Emerita. To become a Commissioner Emerita, such Commissioners whose terms have expired may request such a title from the Worcester County Commission on the Status of Women, which shall be approved at the WCCSW's discretion. The purpose of a Commissioner Emerita is to remain connected to the work of the WCCSW and to continue to participate and have a voice. Commissioner Emeritus may participate in all meetings of the WCCSW but shall have no voting privileges and may serve as a member of a standing WCCSW committee, should they choose.