



Fairfax County Commission for Women



Biennial Report FY2020-FY2021 with reflections on FY2017-FY2019



OVERVIEW OF THE FAIRFAX COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

The Fairfax County Commission for Women (CFW) was established by a resolution of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (BOS) citing economic and social discrimination against women in Virginia and in the nation. September 2021 marks the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the CFW. Our purpose is to carry out such functions that improve the status of women and girls in all aspects of life. The Fairfax County Commission for Women advises the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors on policies and initiatives to promote gender equality, eliminate violence against women, and honor women and girls in Fairfax County.

The Commission for Women is charged with reducing barriers and promoting equal access for women and girls who are discriminated against based on age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, disability, socio-economic status or neighborhood of residence or other characteristics in Fairfax County. The Commission for Women is to:

- 1 Make recommendations and propose initiatives to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to eliminate discrimination on the basis of sex,
- 2 Advise the Board of Supervisors on strategies to remove barriers to women and girls,
- 3 Advise the Board of Supervisors on issues, concerns, and policies related to women and girls in the County,
- 4 Identify problems, concerns, and policies that disproportionately impact women and girls, and
- 5 Recommend and support resources, services, and opportunities that improve the status of women and girls in all aspects of life.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



It is a privilege to serve as Chair of the Fairfax County Commission for Women (CFW), which advocates and serves as a voice for women and girls in the county, some of whom are the most vulnerable and at risk in the area.

In service to the county, the CFW advises the Board of Supervisors on ways to promote gender equity, provide equal access to resources, and eliminate violence against women and girls.

Between FY2017 and FY2021, the CFW promoted and supported numerous initiatives, such as honoring the outstanding women who impact our community daily, maintaining a strong partnership with the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial, and supporting legislation on protective orders and Paid Family Medical Leave.

Success of the CFW is only possible because of the hard work and dedication of the Commissioners who proudly serve their respective districts in Fairfax County. I am honored to serve alongside this devoted group.

We hope you will support us in our mission to promote gender equality, eliminate violence against women, and honor women and girls in Fairfax County.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phylicia L. Woods". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Phylicia L. Woods, JD, MSW

Chair, FY2022—current

PROJECTS/EVENTS FY2020-FY2021

Paid Family and Medical Leave

The CFW advocated and amplified the need to establish Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) by the Commonwealth of Virginia for all workers. The CFW prepared a legislative brief on PFML that was included in the BOS 2020 General Assembly legislative packet. The CFW drafted a position statement to the BOS in support of PFML in hope of having it considered during the 2021 General Assembly Session. With guidance from the Campaign for a Family Friendly Economy, the CFW continues to advocate for PFML.

Women's History Month Celebrations

MARCH 2021

In March 2021 the CFW theme was "Women Warriors in the Forefront of the Pandemic," which celebrated women who were making historic contributions and serving as leaders to support and strengthen our communities. The CFW produced a live forum, which was aired by Fairfax County Channel 16, honoring the highest-ranking women from the county in the Police, Fire and Rescue, and Health Departments. The CFW also recognized five women in the community who had gone above and beyond during the pandemic. Chair Lisa Sales moderated the panel discussion; Phylcia Woods, Providence Commissioner, fielded questions from Facebook Live viewers; and Toni Zollicoffer, Director of Domestic and Sexual Violence Services (DSVS), participated on the panel.

FAIRFAX COUNTY HONOREES

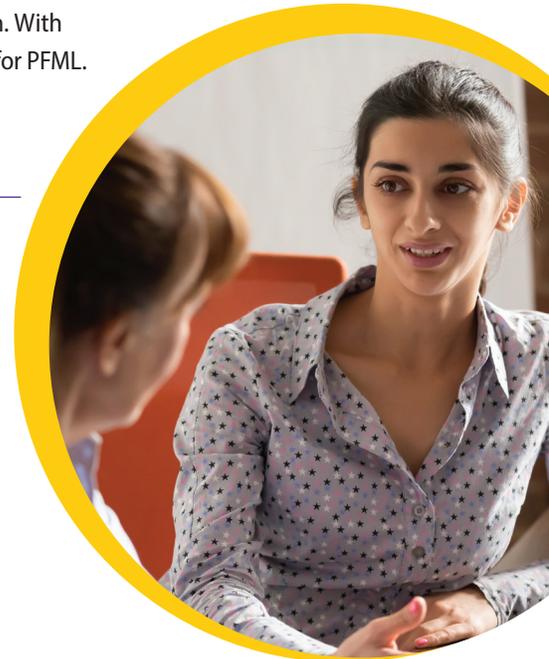
Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, Director, Fairfax County Health Department

Captain Brooke D. Wright, Commander, Mason District Station, Fairfax County Police Department

Deputy Chief Tracey M. Reed, Division I, C-shift, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department

COMMUNITY MEMBERS RECOGNIZED:

Sarah Allen, Karla Bruce, Stacey Brumbaugh, Deborah Claire, and Deanna Heier



During FY2020-FY2021 the Commission met virtually to maintain safe social distance during the global coronavirus pandemic.



(From left to right) Helen Cole, Julie Waters, Phylcia Woods, Emily McCoy

MARCH 2020

In March 2020, the CFW wrote a proclamation, which the BOS read and approved, celebrating the “Valiant Women of the Vote” and acknowledging suffragist history. The proclamation was accepted by Kayla Rothstein, CFW Student Representative. The CFW hosted a reception and recognized three women in Fairfax County for their community service.

HONOREES:

Jane Barker, Vice Chair and Founder, the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial Association

Laura McKie, Museum Director, the Lucy Burns Museum at the Workhouse Arts Center

Cypriana McCray, President, the Reston-Dulles Section of the National Council of Negro Women

In addition, at the behest of the CFW, the Fairfax County School Board passed a resolution to proclaim Women’s History Month that requested the superintendent have a statement about women’s suffrage centennial read during the morning announcements in every school by a student. The text for the announcement was provided.

Turning Point Suffragist Memorial

The CFW established and continued a strong partnership with the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial Association (TPSMA). The TPSMA, with substantial county financial help, has built a national memorial in Lorton in Fairfax County to American suffragists. Emily McCoy, Lee District Commissioner, represented CFW on the TPSMA Board of Directors and led the development of the information contained in the Memorial. The CFW worked with Fairfax County Channel 16 to create several short videos shown on the County Magazine and used at events to educate the public about the suffragist memorial and the suffragists’ struggles and triumphs. The CFW has been represented at all TPSMA events, such as the centennial commemoration of the 1917 “Night of Terror,” TPSMA award ceremonies and fundraising dinners, and spoke at the memorial groundbreaking in November 2019. The Memorial’s dedication, which



Annika Khandelwal, Shafuq Naseem, Jane Materna and Dena Bashri. (Commissioners not pictured: Lisa Sales and Mattie Palmore.)

was scheduled to occur in 2020, the centennial anniversary of the 19th Amendment, was held virtually due to the global pandemic. The CFW arranged for the County to provide a short video on the section of the White House fence in the memorial for the celebration on August 26, 2020. CFW was represented at the dedication on May 16, 2021.

Women's Equality

The CFW advocated for the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to pass a resolution in support of ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the U.S. Constitution, which the BOS passed in 2018. Then, in January 2019, the Virginia General Assembly ratified the ERA. The CFW publicized the need for the ERA to be accepted into the Constitution, for example, by signing our name in support of the "Face the Music 4 ERA" Facebook Live concert; creating a video in support of ERA inclusion into the U.S. Constitution; and uplifting Generation Ratify, a youth movement dedicated to get more youth involved in the effort to ratify the ERA.

In prior years CFW worked with Fairfax Zonta to review Fairfax County's progress on implementation of local benchmarks and programs for women's equality based on the San Francisco Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) ordinance. CEDAW is a United Nations document about equality between girls/women and boys/men and proposes international agreement to eliminate discrimination against girls and women. In recent years the Fairfax League of Women Voters encouraged CFW to partner in support of CEDAW at the county and city government levels.

Protective Order Legislation

The CFW advocated for state-wide protective order legislation with the County Legislative Committee and in the General Assembly. One proposed legislative action ensures removal of firearms from protective order respondents. Another expands protective orders to apply to a more comprehensive range of victim-offender relationships. In 2020 the bill was signed into law by the governor and witnessed by Lisa Sales, Chair and Mt. Vernon Commissioner. CFW also was represented on the Fairfax County Firearms Workgroup.

Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention and Survivor Support

The CFW continues our efforts to mitigate domestic and sexual violence and to provide survivor support.

Actions include:

- Provides Commission for Women representation on Council to End Domestic Violence (CEDV), which was formerly known as the Domestic Violence Prevention, Policy & Coordinating Council (DVPPCC). Advocated for appointment of CFW Underserved At-Large Commissioner to the DVPPCC to represent underserved communities. CFW representatives were honored at the 2018 Fairfax County Domestic Violence Annual Meeting.
- Sponsored in-depth lethality training for County first responders to support countywide adoption of the domestic violence Lethality Assessment Program.
- Sponsored the Dunn Chadwick Fellowship, which provides legal services for domestic violence survivors.
- Provided Domestic and Sexual Violence Service (DSVS) department with research on strategies for mental health support for domestic violence survivors, including effects of domestic violence on children, suicide by domestic violence victims, and addition of hotline texting or chat services. These issues have been acted upon by County agencies.
- Provided and awarded prizes for Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month art contest 2018-2021.
- Provided funding for changing table and sponsored anniversary reception for Supervised Visitation and Exchange Program.
- Sponsored community anti-sexual assault programs, Rally Against Rape and Fairfax County Sexual Assault Awareness Month Walk.



- Continued long standing support of Artemis House emergency shelter for survivors of sexual and domestic violence. Advocated for establishment of a second shelter in the underserved Route 1 area, which the County opened in 2019.

National Association for Commission for Women Conference

Two Commissioners attended the National Association for Commission for Women (NACW) conference in Chicago, July 22-24, 2019, and debriefed the Commission at the September 2019 meeting. Barbara Lipka, Sully Commissioner, received an award for outstanding service on the NACW National Board. Of the many ideas learned from the conference was encouraging participation in NACW's Voices of Women in America Survey and analyzing the results. CFW publicized and shared the survey link through their supervisors' newsletters and individual networks.

The CFW began a liaison with NACW, Loudoun CFW, Arlington Commission on the Status of Women, Alexandria CFW, and the Fairfax City CFW to develop and hold the 2020 NACW in Loudoun. The theme for the conference was "Celebrating Our Voices: Equality, Resilience and Advocacy" and was planned to amplify the nationwide celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment being ratified to the U.S. Constitution. In 2019 the CFW collaborated with other Virginia CFWs to develop the 2020 conference; unfortunately, the conference was cancelled due to the global pandemic.

The 2021 hybrid (virtual and in person) conference with the theme "Hear Our Voices: Equality, Resilience and Advocacy" was held in Leesburg, Virginia. The Conference held discussions on leadership development and intergenerational learning with a special day on Teen Resilience. Lisa Sales, Mt Vernon District, presented on the Equality panel discussion. Helen Cole, Hunter Mill Commissioner, attended the conference. In July 2021 a NACW time capsule honoring the work of commissions across the country was buried at the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial in Fairfax County. The CFW contributed historical documents pertaining to the ERA resolution and celebrating the 100 year anniversary of the 19th Amendment being ratified. Commissioners Sales, McCoy, and Materna were present at the ceremony.

A QUICK LOOK BACK TO FY2017-FY2019

In these prior years, the CFW worked on awareness of teen sex trafficking and addressing workplace violence, as well as on initiatives which carried forward into the present - Women's Equality themed projects, Women's History Month events and Domestic and Sexual Violence Survivor support. Kayla Rothstein, At-Large Student Representative, won 2nd prize for her Virginia State History Day presentation in 2018.

Teen Sex Trafficking Awareness

- In March 2019 sponsored the County's Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month Celebration by funding prizes.
- Built a partnership with Just Ask and helped launch the Just Ask Trafficking Prevention Foundation. Supported its work educating Fairfax County teens and parents about trafficking.
- Participated in the Northern Virginia Human Trafficking Task Force, the regional body created to share information and coordinate anti-trafficking efforts.
- Collaborated with the City of Fairfax Commission for Women, the Alexandria Commission for Women, and the Arlington Commission on the Status of Women to present *Human Trafficking: Get the Facts and Take Action*, a half day workshop featuring experts on trafficking, attended by over 200 people, in January 2016.
- Sponsored and hosted receptions for Board of Supervisors proclamations of Human Trafficking Awareness Month in January of 2015 through 2019, joined by a wide range of partners involved in anti-trafficking efforts.
- Researched and compiled a human trafficking policy paper, which was used to inform the work of the new Countywide Human Trafficking and Sexual Violence Coordinator.

Workplace Violence

- Revised a County security policy to include protections and accommodations for staff who are affected by domestic violence in the workplace.
- In coordination with the DVPPCC, developed a brochure, training, tip sheet and model policy to support education and adoption by Fairfax County businesses and organizations.

Women's History Month Celebrations

Women's History Month was celebrated each year with a proclamation by the BOS. The CFW created a community celebration toolkit, which is available on our website. In 2019, at the behest of the CFW, the School Board issued a proclamation and our student commissioner spoke at the School Board meeting. Each year, except 2019, the CFW held a reception honoring outstanding women in Fairfax:

2018—Fighters of all forms of discrimination: Laura Harris, DV Family Court Intake; Sheila Coates, Black Women United for Action; Lidia Soto-Harmon, Girl Scouts of the National Capital Area; and Grace Cunningham, public displays featuring women, and proclamation recipient.

2017—Trailblazing Women in Business and Labor Patricia Bayliss, American Federation of State, County, & Municipal Employees; Ashley Chen, ActioNet; Connie Cordovilla, American Federation of Teachers; Sioban Green, Sonhara, Inc.; Lovey Hammel, Employment Enterprises, Inc.; Staci Redmon, Strategy and Management Services, Inc.; Dolores Trevino-Gerber, NOVA Labor Federation and Tenants-Workers United.

GUESTS

The Fairfax County Commission for Women wishes to thank the following individuals who spoke at Commission meetings and events, providing valuable information and support for the work of the Commission:

Michael Becketts, *Director, Department of Family Services*

Karla Bruce, *Fairfax County Chief Equity Officer*

Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, *Vice Mayor of Alexandria*

Jill Fellows, *President, Fairfax League of Women Voters*

Rosie Couture, *Founder and Leader, Generation Ratify*

Phyllis Gordon and **Elizabeth Bennis**, *Chairs of the NACW 2020 Conference Committee held in Loudoun County*

Kristina Hagan, *State Director*, and **Briana Sewell**, *Senior Organizer, Campaign For A Family Friendly Economy*



FUTURE VISION

With an eye toward the future, the Fairfax County Commission for Women will continue to promote diversity and equity throughout the County by striving to ensure equitable access to services and resources for all women and girls. The CFW will advocate for the BOS to continue to appoint increasingly diverse commissioners to make the CFW reflective of the diverse community of Fairfax County.

The Commission will also amplify the ongoing work that women serving in leadership positions throughout the community are doing to create better opportunities for women and girls. As CFW serves our Fairfax County community, we will continue to endeavor to be a voice for all women and girls in the County.

**Commissioners
FY2020-FY2021**

Lisa Sales
Mt. Vernon, Chair

Phylcia Woods
Providence, Vice Chair

Helen Cole
Hunter Mill, Vice Chair

Sondra Seba Hemenway
At-Large

Mattie Palmore
Underserved At-Large

Shafuq Naseem
Braddock

Julie Waters
Dranesville

Emily McCoy
Lee

Jane Materna
Mason

Chelsea Smith
Springfield

Dena Bashri
Sully

Annika Khandelwal
Student

**Former Commissioners
FY2017-FY2021**

Charlie Brown
Braddock

Nancy Hopkins
Dranesville

Cynthia Bhatnagar
Mason

Elise Helgesen Aguilar
Providence

Michelle Russell
Springfield

Kathryn McDaniel
Springfield

Barbara Lippa
Sully

Kayla Rothstein
Student