



# Handbook for Developing Women's Commissions

Written by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women  
A partner of the National Association of Commissions for Women  
Boston, Massachusetts  
July 2012

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women would like to acknowledge the many individuals who volunteered their time and effort to contribute to this project. Special thanks go to Tufts University student Alanna Tuller, who rewrote and edited the 2006 edition of this handbook, along with XX of the XX Commission, XX of the XX Commission, and XX of the XX Commission for their assistance in editing this project. Finally, we thank the courageous individuals who have chosen to begin a women's commission as well as those who are already part of a commission. Your efforts continue to have a positive impact on women throughout the United States.

**This guide is based on an original document developed in 1983 by the Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women and the Lincoln-Lancaster (NE) Commission on the Status of Women specifically for the National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW). NACW has granted permission for Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women to use the original guide as a basis for publication.**

## Introduction

*“I wonder whether, in our society, women have the chance to use their powers, their full powers, intellectual powers, emotional powers, and all the rest, along the lines of excellence.”*

-- John F. Kennedy, 1963

When John F. Kennedy established the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women in 1961, he charged Chairwoman Eleanor Roosevelt with the responsibility of assessing the economic and social status of women in the United States at that time. Their research yielded *The Presidential Report on American Women*, a publication which raised awareness about the discrimination and sexism American women experienced in most areas of their lives. The report also brought to light the inequalities between women and men in the political, legal, and civil sectors, finally placing the plight of women at the forefront of the American psyche.

After the Presidential Commission dissolved in 1963 The National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW) formed to take its place. Though the NACW still acts as a resource for approximately 220 state, county and city commissions throughout the United States, President Kennedy’s musings about women’s powers still generate important questions to consider when forming a commission. How do women use their different powers to achieve excellence in the community? Are there structures which prevent women from exercising this power? Identifying these obstacles will reveal where the commission is needed most and determine the role it will play in the community.

Before addressing the more concrete aspects of establishing a commission, it is important to truly consider what the purpose of your commission will be and how you will accomplish that goal. A commission has the potential to serve as a forum for political advocacy, to provide the opportunity to liaise with other women’s organizations, to empower women who do not have the agency to advocate for themselves, and to recognize and promote the accomplishments of strong women in the community. Women’s commissions have the potential to affect great social change, and we hope you take full advantage of this opportunity.

While this handbook can certainly serve as a guide for a commission’s establishment, by no means is it a rulebook. Tailor the commission to the women around you and do not be afraid to stray from the precedent if it means improving the lives of the women in your community. On behalf of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, we wish you the best of luck with your commission and remind you that we, along with the NACW and all other women’s commissions, are here as a resource should you have any questions or want any guidance or support.

Contact the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women at [mcsw@state.ma.us](mailto:mcsw@state.ma.us) or (617) 626-6520, and contact the National Association of Commissions for Women at [info@nacw.org](mailto:info@nacw.org) or (855) 703-6229.

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I.

Creating a New Commission: The Legislative  
Process

## **Commission Models**

The first step to establishing a commission is to decide what level of government will be the most appropriate platform for the causes to be addressed by the commission. Commissions can be established on the city, county and state levels depending on the group of women which will benefit from the commission's efforts. Furthermore there are two basic, but not exclusive, models for establishing commissions which differ slightly in terms of organization:

1. A commission can be established by an executive order, legislative order, or with a statute. Commissioners have final authority and staff members report to the commissioners.
2. The executive or legislative branch of government elects an executive director for the commission, who is held responsible to the electing branch of government. The director makes decisions for the commission with final authority, while commissioners exercise lesser authority and advise the director.

## **Working with Elected Officials**

Whether a commission is established with an executive order, legislative order, or by executive or legislative appointment, creating personal connections with elected officials is the most effective way to gain support for the commission. Speak directly with local politicians and demonstrate how the community will benefit from a women's commission and what specific issues need to be addressed. At this stage it will be helpful to draft a clear, concise mission statement which can be shared with elected officials and supporters.

It will also be important to stay in touch with any contacts that have been made in the government. When it is time to select commissioners, the appointing authorities will want to have an idea of the commission's work and future goals in order to better select commissioners who fit well with the mission. Appointment duties can be the responsibility of one elected official, such as the mayor or governor, can be divided among multiple individuals including Senate or House majority leaders, city councilors or women's legislative caucuses.

Finally, it is strongly recommended that the commission's funding or funding opportunity is secured through the enabling legislation. Though it is possible to function exclusively on fundraising, commissions which receive the government's financial backing are better equipped to implement projects and programs because of their guaranteed resources. Additionally, a fixed budget will provide the funds to hire permanent staff members who will be an invaluable resource to the organization.

*See Appendix A for a sample State Enabling Legislation.*

*See Appendix B for a sample County Enabling Legislation.*

*See Appendix C for a sample City Enabling Legislation.*

## Selecting and Training Your Commissioners

The specific number of commissioners and corresponding appointing authorities should be described in the commission's enabling legislation. After the legislation has been enacted the appointing authorities or establishing body should solicit applications from potential commissioners. Once the applications have been received it is the appointing authorities' responsibility to review the candidates and appoint the appropriate number of commissioners. The commissioners can then officially be sworn in, an event which also presents an important opportunity to generate press about the new commission.

Commissions can also contribute to the selection process if effective outreach strategies are used to connect with potential commissioners. Establish contact with possible candidates throughout the year by providing volunteer opportunities for non-commission members, asking staff or current commissioners for recommendations, contacting women's organizations or other women's commissions, and talking to professionals whose work is related to that of the commission.

Furthermore, it is important to have a diverse group of commissioners. Pay attention to the age, sex, race, interests and knowledge of candidates during the selection process and compose a commission which represents a cross-section of your community. Another factor to consider is the variety of the commissioners' professional skills. A wide range of skills will contribute positively to the organization especially if the commissioners are knowledgeable in areas such as budgeting and finance, education, legal rights, media, or politics.

Training the newly appointed commissioners will also be an important part of the establishment process. When planning a commissioner orientation remember to emphasize themes such as leadership skills, team building, communication, and the respectful and sensitive treatment of all members and issues addressed by the commission. Provide everyone with a new commissioner manual, which will also serve as a guide for the orientation. The manual should cover, at a minimum, the following topics to ensure that all new commissioners understand their roles and responsibilities to the commission:

1. Overview of the commission and mission statement
2. History
3. Legislation (establishing act and bylaws)
4. Commission structure
5. Commissioner and appointing authorities contact information
6. Swearing-in policy
7. Calendar and meeting schedule
8. Registration and commitment forms
9. Budget and reimbursement policies
10. Office organization and procedures
11. Program and event planning

If it is not included in the establishing legislation, create a membership policy to discuss at the new commissioner orientation. Successful membership policies pay attention to the length of

service, reappointment procedures, measures for the rotation of commissioners and committees, and commissioner evaluation. These policies will ensure that commissioners clearly understand their responsibilities to the organization and the weight carried by their appointments.

Orientation also presents a good opportunity to gather basic information for each commissioner's file. Ask the commissioners to bring a resume or a curriculum vitae, and if these are unavailable create a form to get information about each commissioner's educational background, volunteer positions, civic involvement, professional experience, special interests and skills, and contact information.

*See Appendix D for a sample Commissioner Application Packet.*

## **Bylaws**

One of the first tasks for a new commission is to draft a set of bylaws, which are the codes and regulations by which the commission will be governed. Researching examples of bylaws in a local library or on the internet will help commissioners to begin thinking about how to draft a new set of bylaws. Be sure to consider the following themes when discussing the bylaws with the commission:

1. Authority and leadership positions
2. Definition and process of membership
3. Officers, staff and committees
4. Structure and frequency of meetings
5. Budget
6. Processes to amend the bylaws

If possible, seek legal counsel and receive the approval of all commissioners before officially accepting your bylaws. Furthermore, the bylaws are a living document and should be reviewed regularly to ensure they are still consistent with the commission's vision and goals.

*See Appendix E for a sample set of bylaws.*

## **Commission Structure**

Different leadership positions and committees exist within each commission to distribute responsibilities between commissioners and staff members.

### ***Officers***

One of the commission's first responsibilities as a new organization will be to elect commission officers. The positions typically created include chair, vice-chair, treasurer and secretary, and the length of the term to be served should be predetermined by the commission. It is also important to consider the candidates' leadership qualities and commitment to the organization. Officers should also be willing to take on responsibilities, exercise authority, help with the long and short term planning of the commission, organize the efforts of others, and communicate effectively. Should an officer fail to fulfill these requirements, create a standard procedure for removing and

replacing that officer. Clearly explaining the expectations and responsibilities of each position should prevent the need to dismiss any commissioners in a leadership position.

### ***Staff***

If the commission is supported by permanent funding, an operating budget should be created which will be managed by the director. In addition to overseeing the budget the executive director may also contribute to strategic planning, coordinate commission events, supervise other hired staff or volunteers working in the office, organize and participate in advocacy efforts, and schedule the commission's meetings.

### ***Interns and Volunteers***

Interns and volunteers are an excellent resource and allow for connections to be created between the commissioners and other women in the community. Having interns work alongside the executive director, staff and commissioners will help to develop the interns' understanding of women's issues and provide a platform to address these issues directly. Interns can be undergraduate, graduate or post-graduate students who come from a variety of academic backgrounds to contribute to the overall mission of the commission.

Volunteers are also an important part of the commission's workforce, particularly for their ability to contribute to the commission on an ad hoc basis and act as liaisons between the commission and the women they serve. Even if volunteers have not been appointed as commissioners, include their perspective by inviting them to serve on a planning committee or help with some of the commission's events.

### ***Committees***

Creating committees to carry out specific projects may help the commission to run more smoothly and efficiently. Commissioners should join committees based on the specific skills or interests they have to ensure that everyone in the committee is passionate about furthering the same cause. We suggest the creation of the following committees:

1. Budget and Finance
2. Legislative
3. Outreach and Education
4. Communication
5. Advocacy and Special Events
6. Projects and Planning

Working in smaller groups also allows commissioners to cultivate their leadership skills, which can be useful for developing future officers and can make each member of the commission feel as if she or he is contributing directly to the organization. Committee meetings also provide an informal environment for brainstorming creative ideas and solutions to problems faced by the commission and allow commissioners to work as a team for the betterment of the commission specifically and women in general.

## II.

# Funding Sources: How to Finance Your Commission

## **Obtaining Funding and Creating a Budget**

If possible commissions should secure funding through their establishing legislation because it guarantees the ability to finance new projects, host events, and hire staff with steady funds. Staff members who have spent some time with the commission will have a better idea of how to plan the budget each year. Consider the following expenditures when deciding how to distribute the commission's funding, especially if the commission is relatively new:

1. Salary
2. Travel Reimbursement
3. Office Supplies
4. Special Events and Hearings
5. Internet and Website Services
6. Printing Services
7. Postage

Funding can be obtained in a variety of ways, and we encourage you to explore as many of these avenues as possible. Also keep in mind that different kinds of fundraising can help with both long and short term goals, ensuring that your commission will always have the means to execute the projects, events, and programs you wish to sponsor.

## **Forming a Nonprofit or “Friends of the Commission” Organization**

It is often challenging for government funded agencies and commissions to secure corporate funding because they lack 501(c)(3) status, whereas nonprofit agencies are eligible receive such funding. According to the Foundation Center, an organization which educates the public about philanthropy, an effective nonprofit organization “has the ability to fulfill its mission through a blend of sound management, strong governance, and a persistent rededication to achieving results.” The process of creating a nonprofit organization is similar to that of forming a commission and begins with filing a certificate of incorporation.

First, draft a certificate or articles of incorporation and file this document with the office of the Secretary of State or Attorney General, depending on the protocol for the commission's location. The next step will be to choose a board of directors who will govern the organization. Board members should have a vested interest in the commission's goals, be able to work as part of a team and have connections with people who can make financial contributions to the organization. Once selected the board can also help to compose the commission's mission statement and decide the course of the organization's future.

Similar to establishing a commission, a set of bylaws should be created next with input from the nonprofit's members. After the bylaws have been approved, bank accounts can be set up for the organization by requesting an employer identification number (EIN), also known as a federal tax identification number, after filing paperwork with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). This step usually takes no more than one month and there is no fee to obtain this number.

Once the commission has received an EIN it can file for federal tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) with the IRS. This status will be granted three to six months after filing the paperwork and it is recommended an attorney or lawyer is hired to provide legal counsel and to guide the commission through this process. Because the commission might not have the financial resources to afford legal advice, research organizations which can provide contact information for lawyers who will volunteer their services. After gaining federal tax-exempt status, some states also require nonprofits to file separately for state and local tax exemptions.

Finally, create a plan to fundraise from diverse sources to guarantee as many opportunities as possible to bolster the commission's financial resources. The following sections describe some different methods of raising money for your nonprofit. These strategies can be used to fundraise outside the context of a nonprofit organization as well if you choose not to add a nonprofit to your commission.

### ***Direct Mail***

Direct mail campaigns can be a useful tool for the commission because they target a specific group which will, if selected appropriately, respond positively to requests for donations. A commissioner or volunteer with advertising experience should spearhead the campaign and tailor it to the group which will be targeting. It is possible to purchase address lists based on a variety of criteria including resident lists, business lists and political party member lists. Focusing the fundraising campaign on a specific audience will generate positive feedback and, hopefully, the funds needed to finance some of the commission's activities. It is also important to keep all mailing lists up to date to ensure that the commission's time and money are being spent sending mailings to accurate addresses.

### ***Corporate Funding***

Many corporations provide support to nonprofit organizations through private foundations, direct giving programs, or a combination of the two. Corporate-sponsored foundations are separate legal entities which are closely tied to the corporation, whereas direct-giving programs are not separate from the corporation itself. A major incentive for corporations to donate is that direct-giving programs permit deductions of up to ten percent on their pre-tax incomes. Either of these options presents the opportunity to partner with a well-established corporation that can provide a steady source of funding to the commission.

### ***Grants***

Grants typically fall into the three categories of private, federal, or state funds. To receive a private grant the commission can submit a proposal to a private foundation, corporation, private trust, or corporate foundation. Federal and state grants are cash grants, direct loans, or shared revenues awarded by federal and state governments to an organization. All three types of grants typically allow the grantor to specify the conditions under which the funds can be used. Therefore, it is important to select grantors whose interests align closely with those of the commission.

### ***In-Kind Donations***

In-kind donations are non-monetary donations in the form of tangible items or services provided by corporations or businesses. This type of donation is good for both short-term planning, such as a business which donates the refreshments for a one-time event, as well as long-term planning if the commission establishes strong connections with businesses which support its mission.

### ***Special Fundraising Events***

While special events can present an initial investment, they are ultimately worth it for the connections forged between the commission and event attendees in addition to any monetary donations collected at the event. Fundraising events might focus on generating funds immediately or, with an eye towards the future, emphasize networking and forming connections with potential funding sources. At the event, provide guests with a clear explanation of how their donations will help to further the commission's vision and be sure to follow up with attendees after the event to guarantee future donations.

### ***Planned Gifts***

Planned gifts refer to a donor's decision to appropriate funds for an organization which are to be donated after her or his death. Legally, a planned gift must be provided in some form while the donor is alive but the principal benefits do not accrue until the donor's passing or the passing of her or his income beneficiaries. Planned gifts provide the funds for long-range planning and are an excellent asset for projects the commission might wish to execute in the future.

### III.

## Organization and Operations

## **Creating an Annual Calendar**

It is recommended that staff, commissioners, and interns should compile a calendar of all the commission's meetings and events for the next fiscal year. Choosing a consistent meeting time for each committee can be one of the most helpful decisions when creating the calendar. For example, the Executive Committee might meet the third Wednesday every month while the Legislative and Public Policy Committee will meet the second Wednesday every month. Providing a consistent meeting day will guarantee a greater rate of attendance at meetings.

It is also helpful to consider including the following meetings and events when planning your calendar:

1. Full Commission Meetings
2. Committee Meetings
3. International and National Women's Events, such as Equal Pay Day, Women's History Month, and International Women's Day
4. Planning Sessions
5. Commission Events, such as advocacy days or annual fundraisers
6. Public Hearings
7. New Member Training

When planning the calendar, consider any conflicts which might arise for predetermined meeting days. Take note of federal, state, and religious holidays and be mindful of any commissioners with children whose school calendars could create conflicts. Submit a draft of the calendar to the chair and seek her approval before distributing it to the rest of the commissioners.

## **Meetings**

Meetings are essential to the operation of any commission because they provide the opportunity for commissioners and staff members to work together and assess the status of the commission, brainstorm new ideas, and create solutions to any problems which might arise. Most commissions see a strong partnership between commissioners and staff as they work together to accomplish collective goals. Regular meetings, either in person or via conference call, allow members to establish a close working relationship and create a positive force for both the internal strength and public reputation of the organization. In addition to forging this partnership, perhaps the most important function of commission meetings is the opportunity to plan for future action.

A marker of any commission's success is certainly its ability to have positive, concrete effects on the lives of women in its area of jurisdiction, an act which can be accomplished by anything from advocating for pertinent legislation to honoring strong women in the community. Therefore, the most critical component of any meeting is that ideas are not left behind in the board room but are given life and brought to action to fulfill the commission's vision. To go one step further, consider combining meetings with actions or events such as public hearings or advocacy days.

A few days before a meeting is set to occur, remind commissioners and staff members of the date, time, and location of the meeting. Discuss the issues to be addressed the decisions to be

made at the meeting in order to emphasize why their attendance is so important. Assigning tasks to each attendee beforehand will also guarantee the efficiency of the meeting and make them feel directly involved in the planning process.

Creating a clear and informative agenda will also help your meeting to run as smoothly as possible. The agenda should be distributed to all attendees a week prior to the meeting and should be posted in a public location. Obtaining the agenda ahead of time will allow commissioners and staff to be prepared for the discussions and decisions to be made at the meeting, as well as providing a time frame for how long each item will be discussed. On a technical note, the agenda should also include the date, time and location of the meeting and, if possible, the same information for the following meeting. When drafting an agenda, consider including the following items:

1. Roll Call
2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes
3. Chair's Report
4. Director / Staff Report
5. Committee Reports
6. Old Business
7. New Business
8. Reminder of Future Meetings and Events

During the meeting the chair will moderate discussion, keep the meeting within time constraints, and encourage the participation of all attendees. The chair should begin by calling the meeting to order and then introducing and welcoming guests and new members. Make sure everyone has an agenda and briefly review it before beginning to provide a foundation for participation. During the course of discussion, have the secretary record minutes of the conversation.

It will also be useful to have a set of rules for the conduct of meetings which will help all members understand the most effective way to voice her or his opinion. Obtaining a copy of *Robert's Rules of Order* is a good place to start for learning how to make the most of commission meetings. The chair should adjourn the meeting after the entire agenda has been covered and all discussions have reached an appropriate conclusion in the context of the meeting. After the meeting, distribute the minutes as soon as possible to all commissioners, staff members, and guests who attended the meeting, and submit them for the chair's approval. Keep all of the commission's minutes on file for future reference.

## IV.

# Issue Identification and Advocacy

## **Identifying Issues: Public Hearings**

To make the commission's advocacy work as effective as possible, identify issues which specifically affect women in the community. Holding a public hearing is an excellent way to gain a better understanding of the real obstacles currently confronted by women. These meetings are open to the public and provide individuals with the opportunity to share their concerns with the commission.

Begin planning a few months in advance by securing a location large enough to accommodate the anticipated audience and, if possible, find a space in which the hearing can be held free of charge. Reach out to a variety of individuals and organizations who you would like to see attend the hearing, and consider contacting local organizations, municipal legislators, the commission's appointing authorities, and those who have volunteered with the commission in the past. Send letters to these contacts and post flyers around the town or city in which the hearing will be held, keeping track of the total cost for mailings and flyers. Legislators should be contacted with a phone call a few weeks after the letters are mailed to remind them about the hearing.

In addition to individual contacts, make the event known to a larger audience through local media such as newspapers, radio, and cable access stations. Alert these media outlets of the time, date and location of the hearing by writing a media advisory, press release, or public service announcement and distributing it two weeks before the hearing. Create a flyer to include with the mailing and to post around the community, making sure it is simply designed, easy to read, and contains all the necessary information about the date, time, location and theme of the hearing. And, if there is a budget for advertising, consider creating ads for the main newspaper in each city or town to be served by the hearing.

Also take into account that some cities or towns will have multilingual populations and ads should be translated into those different languages to reach as large of an audience as possible. Additionally, it is worth finding translators to speak at the hearing. Communicate with the contact person at the hearing location to find out more information about the different languages spoken in the region and to see if she or he has any suggestions for places to find translators.

Confirm ahead of time if there is an audio system at the location and, if not, leave enough time to obtain one before the hearing. The entire hearing should be recorded and transcribed for the hearing report, so it is important that the appropriate equipment is available. When the day of the hearing arrives, set up a long table at the front of the room for the commissioners and a smaller table or desk facing the commissioners for those testifying, plus rows of chairs for the audience. Have a sign-in table at the location's entrance, and make sure to add the attendee's names to a contact list later on so they can be informed of future hearings or events in their area.

During the hearing, invite community members to testify before the commissioners and to share their issues or concerns about the status of women in their community, encouraging women from all backgrounds to share their stories to create a dialogue which includes the entire audience. Before attendees leave the hearing, distribute a survey to get feedback about the meeting and to provide women with an opportunity to inform the commission of any issues about which they were not able to testify. After the hearing has finished, combine the survey results and the

transcript of the meeting in the hearing report. Additionally, look for any mention of the hearing in local media and contact newspapers which published stories about the hearing and request a copy of the article or print a copy from the newspaper's website.

Send thank you letters to the contact person at the hearing location and to any legislators who attended the event. Within a month of the hearing distribute a hearing report to all attendees, legislators, and other individuals who could benefit from the information learned during the course of the hearing. Public hearings can take a significant amount of planning but done over the course of a few months it is a very manageable process and is a deeply rewarding event when the commission can hear directly from its constituents about the most pertinent issues in their lives.

### **Advocacy Efforts**

It is recommended that the commission organizes an advocacy training session for all commissioners, especially those interested in lobbying on behalf of the commission. Begin with a clear explanation of the overall structure of the legislature including the different leadership positions and the current legislators. Consider bringing in a speaker to advocacy training session who has lobbying experience or a legislator who can share her or his best practices for effective lobbying.

In short, good lobbying comes from familiarity with the legislators and having a clear understanding of the issues at hand. Try to see legislators as allies and enter with the mindset that the commission will be working with, rather than against, her or him. Know her or his past stance on important issues and make sure to follow up with any legislators after a visit. When a legislator takes positive action on the commission's behalf, be sure to thank her or him for supporting the organization.

Another way to strengthen advocacy efforts is to bring together various women's groups to form a coalition which can advocate for women's issues addressed by the commission. Creating a directory of women's organizations to build a network of friends and advocates increases the commission's ability to take action and will provide potential contacts for the caucus. Once a coalition has been established task forces can be created to plan specific actions for the issues on which the commission would like to focus, remembering that sometimes it is better to focus on a smaller, more manageable portion of a larger issue which should be addressed over the course of months or years.

### **Utilizing the Political System**

It is important to understand the political system of the area your commission will be serving so it can be used as much to the commission's advantage as possible. Familiarize staff and commissioners with the local lawmakers and attend events at which they will be speaking, such as candidate nights or forums, to learn about their stances on women's issues. Send legislators questions ahead of time so they can research the issues the commission feels are most pressing for women in the area.

Another method of staying up to date on the current state of important legislation is to hold a forum in which the commission can directly interact with legislators who support the bill. When the legislature is in session, invite a legislator to speak with the commission and interested community members, allotting time for both discussion of the issue and questions and answers. Direct contact with legislators will be essential in making progress on any legislation the commission would like to see passed.

As a government entity which uses its resources for political advocacy, a women's commission has political influence but must use this power intelligently. In the simplest sense, women's commissions exist to give all women a permanent, effective voice and full equality in all areas of their lives. The causes or legislation the commission chooses to support should be non-partisan to ensure that publicly provided resources are being used to help as many women as possible. Finally, keep in mind that while supporting a certain bill or law might be polarizing among legislators, the commission is entrusted with the responsibility to lobby for legislation which promises to improve the quality of life for all women in the community, even if it does split along party lines.

V.

## Communication and Outreach: Promoting Your Commission

## **Spearheading a Public Relations Campaign**

The key to a successful public relations campaign is to understand the audience. Targeting a specific demographic will elicit a larger and more positive response, resulting in greater support for the commission. Consider an approach which utilizes different kinds of media to reach the greatest number of people possible.

Consider reaching out to publications which serve special interest groups such as the League of Women Voters, university publications, community groups, and veterans' organizations. Though these publications are small they generally have a strong readership and result in motivated supporters of the commission. Remember that the commission should function as a non-partisan organization which acts in the public's best interest, an approach which will prevent your commission from being too polarizing or making certain members of your audience feel excluded.

Major commission events, such as fundraisers or the induction of new commissioners, will make for the most newsworthy stories. The tone of the story should appropriately reflect the nature of the news source, and if a piece is intended as an exclusive do not offer it to more than one news source. Alert the media early enough so they will time the release of your story to coincide with the event. Prepare a detailed fact sheet, media alert, or press release to distribute to media personnel and agree to be quoted if appropriate.

### **Print Media**

It is very important to consider the audiences of different types of newspapers because the content of a newspaper usually depends on how widely the newspaper is circulated. Larger newspapers are more likely to report matters which reach a wider audience such as the election of officers, new programs, and notable policy actions. Conversely, smaller daily and weekly newspapers are more interested in local news such as the appointment of commissioners or meeting announcements.

Writing a weekly newspaper column is also worth considering especially because newspapers are accustomed to paying for syndicated feature columns and might welcome free articles. Opinion pieces, editorials, and letters to the editor are also useful methods of sharing information about women's issues or upcoming events. If the commission has chosen to work on an ongoing series of articles or editorials, consider meeting with the editorial board of a newspaper to discuss the project.

Remind reporters to attend important events by sending out a media advisory the day before the event, or send a press release to reporters who might not be able to attend. When writing a press release be sure to emphasize the most significant aspect of the story in the first paragraph. The rest of the press release or media advisory should include the "who," "what," "where," "when," and "why" of the event. Provide background information where appropriate but keep the story as concise as possible.

Newsletters are another form of print or electronic media which will benefit any public relations effort and are used to inform the public about the commission's most recent events and accomplishments. General information about the state of women in the city, county, or state served by the commission can also be included and will allow the newsletter to serve as a valuable resource for establishing connections with individuals and organizations which might want to support you in the future.

*See Appendix F for a Sample Media Advisory and Appendix G for a Sample Press Release.*

## **Websites and Social Media**

Creating an informational, easy-to-navigate website is one of the most important resources for those trying to learn about the work performed by the commission. The ubiquity of the internet means a well-planned website is now more important than ever and will create connections with a far wider audience than any newspaper or television show possibly could. The website should include basic information about the commission, links to other local women's commissions, basic facts about the legislation supported by the commission, a calendar with information about upcoming events and recent publications, especially annual reports.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are also an effective way to connect with potential supporters. A Facebook page or profile will help the commission to establish a more permanent internet presence and provides the opportunity to record the organization's mission, post pictures, create links to events, and provide updates to other users who view the page. Twitter is more effective for the dissemination of brief announcements or reminders for upcoming events. LinkedIn is similar to Facebook in that it allows the commission to connect with other users, but these interactions emphasize networking and professional interactions rather than the more informal information usually posted on Facebook.

Maintaining a blog is another method of promoting the commission but with greater freedom than the rigid templates of social media platforms. The ability to self-publish in the format of a blog allows for contributions from staff members, commissioners and interns, in addition to providing the flexibility to write posts ranging from summaries of commission events to op-ed style pieces about the status of women in the community.

## **Radio and Television**

Cable television and certain radio shows are also an effective means of reaching a wider audience. Public access programming on cable television is specifically designed to serve the local community and provides an opportunity to reach an audience which has a vested interest in local events. Public service programs offer a more personal approach to media outreach when commissioners or staff members are interviewed about the commission's work or a particular piece of legislation. Another consideration should be public service announcements, which would allow the commission to inform listeners and viewers about a variety of women's issues without having to purchase airtime.

## **Speakers Bureau**

If there are commissioners who enjoy public speaking and would like to donate their time outside of commission meetings, creating a speakers bureau is an excellent way to utilize their talents. Speakers should be well-versed in a few predetermined topics, such as the history of the commission and the most current women's issues, and should be prepared to provide informational talks about these topics when requested to do so. Send a brochure detailing the various topics and the names of the speakers to local and government organizations which might be interested in the topics which will be addressed by the commissioners.

## **Collateral**

Compile a collection of pamphlets and brochures discussing the different causes supported by the commission, the commission's history, and the key pieces of legislation the commission hopes to see passed in the near future. Keep this collateral on hand at any events hosted by the commission and in the office to distribute to visitors. It might also be useful to gather collateral from other women's commissions such as the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor or other similar organizations which might have already put together resources concerning topics of interest for the commission and its constituents.

Chapter VI.  
Activities and Events

## **Planning Events with a Purpose**

One of the best ways to connect with supporters and spread the word about the commission is to hold a public event. During the planning stages of any event, remember to ask the commission's efforts will benefit women in the community and if there is anything which can be done to welcome even more women and provide them with the opportunity to gain something from the event. The type of event should reflect the commission's goals and what is hoped to be accomplished by bringing together members of the community.

## **Types of Events**

Fundraisers are a staple event for many commissions. Though fundraisers and auctions are largely held to collect funds for the commission do not overlook the opportunity to create some good press as well. Hold an event which involves all different sectors of the community including speakers or activities which will interest a broad spectrum of individuals. It is a good idea to seek out as many in-kind donations for the event as possible to ensure that the commission is not losing any funds on the event. Catering companies are often willing to donate some food to fundraisers and it might also be able to secure the location for free if it is in a public building. Fundraisers can also be paired with a variety of other events, such as networking or celebration events, to appeal to an even wider audience.

Ceremonies honoring or celebrating individuals and groups in the community are also an important component of the commission's outreach efforts. Consider honoring successful women or girls in the community or celebrating a national event such as Women's History Month or Women's Equality Day. Awareness events are also very worthwhile to organize and will help to spread the word about important issues affecting women in the community, such as domestic violence or the wage gap between women and men. Advocacy days add action to awareness events when individuals who are now aware of a community's most pressing issues lobby, as a group, for the passage of legislation to correct these problems.

If the commission is looking for a more structured event, conferences and symposia are also an effective method of facilitating discussion between individuals and organizations with regards to a specific topic. Conferences and symposia differ from awareness events in that they are often on a much larger scale and require more planning but bring together a greater number of attendees. Networking events are also a good way to gather large crowds, especially to establish professional connections, build coalitions, and to coordinate advocacy efforts. Events specifically coordinated for networking can vary greatly in size, ranging from a roundtable discussion to a larger conference-sized gathering.

Just as fundraisers are easily paired with many events, public relations efforts also mesh well with many of the aforementioned events. It is always a good idea to connect some sort of public relations effort with any commission event because it not only raises further awareness about the issues at hand but also establishes the commission as having a strong community presence.

## **Event Planning**

Depending on the scale of the event planning can begin anywhere from one year to a few months in advance, even if the initial stages are simply brainstorming about the purpose of the event, how many people will attend, creating a planning committee, and what sort of resources are necessary. It will be important to create a budget early in the planning process to guarantee there will be sufficient resources to successfully execute the event. When creating a budget consider that, if nothing will be donated, the commission will have to pay for the site, catering, speakers, technical assistance, invitations and advertisements, in addition to other expenses which might be specific to your event.

The next step will be to select a venue, keeping in mind the type of space which will be most conducive to the event. Public spaces, such as government buildings or community centers, might be able to provide space for the event free of charge if the location is reserved far enough in advance. Some other important venue considerations are the size, location relative to public transportation, the date and time of the event, and if there will be audio and visual equipment available. At this stage, it will also be important to have a rough idea of how many guests will attend so the venue will be guaranteed to accommodate everyone.

For an awards event leave enough time to select and research honorees in advance, especially if the commission is seeking nominations by elected officials or prominent community members. Once the guest list is finalized begin to think about invitations for the event. Request that guests RSVP so the committee can plan for enough space and food to be available during the event. When inviting elected officials seek out those who are most relevant to your event in terms of local, state, or national politics. Provide them with information about the event, and follow up as the event gets closer to remind them of their anticipated attendance.

Around the same time invitations are mailed begin to request donations, both monetary and in-kind, to help finance the event. Caterers, printers, and speakers could all very likely be willing to donate their services. This will also be a good time to begin the public relations campaign for the event. Place ads in local newspapers, utilize social media, and create flyers to post in areas where potential attendees are likely to see them. (For more ideas about public relations, see Chapter IV.)

Finally, begin to search for volunteers early enough so there will be enough time to recruit sufficient help for the event. Contact anyone who has volunteered for the commission in the past and ask them to help recruit more volunteers. Make sure to train the volunteers before the event, providing them with all the information they will need to be as helpful to the attendees as possible. Every event is unique and will require its own specific timeline, but keeping these general planning stages in mind will facilitate a successful and well-coordinated event.

## Chapter VII.

### Commission Evaluation

## Evaluating the Commission

Once the commission has established a presence it is important to take a step back and evaluate how effectively the commission is addressing the needs of women in the community. Yearly evaluations are a good measure of the commission's progress as well as the improvements which need to be made in the future. Furthermore, keeping records of the commission's yearly progress will allow future commissioners to understand the organization's history and how it can be strengthened to serve even more women. The following two sections describe important methods of evaluation which every commission should undertake for a comprehensive review of its work.

### *Annual Reports*

Many commissions are required by their establishing statute, legislation or bylaws to compile an annual report summarizing the commission's accomplishments during the year and its goals for the future. Even if a commission is not required to submit an annual report it is strongly recommended the commission do so because it not only allows for the an internal evaluation of the organization but also results in a concrete document which can be shared with appointing authorities, legislators and community partners. Showing an annual report to these key commission supporters will demonstrate the importance of maintaining a women's commission in the community.

A good place to begin is by assessing the previous year's annual report and deciding which aspects were successful and in which ways the next report can be improved. Additionally, discussing major objectives for the report before beginning to write will allow contributors to understand the big picture. Consider focusing on a specific theme to ensure the report's continuity by emphasizing certain aspects of the commission's work during the year, such as community involvement or new programs initiated by the commission. At a minimum the report should include the following sections to provide a comprehensive picture of the commission's accomplishments and goals:

1. Programs and Activities: Summarizing the events and programs initiated by the commission during the year shows the breadth of the commission's impact on the community. Include summaries of public hearings and brief descriptions of any awards ceremonies, conferences, or other events coordinated by the commission. Such descriptions might also encourage readers to participate in these same events next year, raising even more support for the commission.
2. Research: While it is not necessary to combine any of the commission's research with the annual report it is important to describe, even with a brief summary, how the commission is contributing to the current store of knowledge about the state of women in a specific city, county, or state. Inform readers of the titles of any work published by the commission during the year along with the titles and dates of any research which will be published in the future.
3. Priority Legislation: Include brief descriptions of any bills the commission supports or is tracking and why this legislation is relevant to women, along with the names of legislators who are the bill's lead sponsors. Providing information about the

commission's legislative activity allows readers – especially elected officials – to utilize the report as a call to action.

4. Budget: Provide a general overview of the commission's budget including salaries, operating expenses and any other large expenditures made during the year. Demonstrating fiscal responsibility has the potential to increase funding when shown to appointing authorities and legislators who determine funding cuts or increases for the commission.

While these four major areas should provide an idea of what to include in an annual report by no means is it a comprehensive list. Include additional accomplishments, more information about the commission's goals and mission and other updates that will be relevant to readers, legislators, and appointing authorities. Also be sure to create a budget for the report, considering the quantity of reports and the cost of paper and printing. When the report is complete distribute it to all appointing authorities, commissioners, key legislators, other state commission chairs and local women's organizations. Additionally, send copies to the National Association for Commissions on Women (NACW) and the Department of Labor Women's Bureau. Finally, upload the report to the commission's website to share with an even larger audience.

### ***Annual Planning Sessions***

Once the annual report has been completed the entire commission should come together to discuss the report and, more generally, to assess the previous year and brainstorm ways to improve the commission during the upcoming year. Because many of the materials presented at the planning session will be long term projects such as the annual report and the yearly calendar, plan enough time to have these projects completed in time for the session. The planning session also presents an opportunity to hold elections for the executive committee and other committee chairs, so be sure to include a ballot in the materials. Also consider including next year's proposed budget, commissioner commitment forms, and commission evaluations if it is necessary to gather concrete feedback from the commissioners regarding the current state of the commission. A standard planning session agenda should include the following:

1. Introduction and Welcome
2. Elections
3. Old Business
4. Review and Planning (discuss events, programs, and hearings)
5. Planning for Next Year (brainstorming, goal setting)
6. Individual Committee Meetings
7. Review of Goals for Next Year
8. Closing Remarks

Holding an annual planning session will allow the commission to evaluate its progress and what still needs to be done for the future. Taking a step back and assessing whether or not the commission is truly meeting its goals and fulfilling its mission statement will allow the organization to work with a clearer focus in the coming year, remembering why they do the work they do and ensuring that their work benefits as many women from as many backgrounds as possible.

# Appendices

## APPENDIX A

### ESTABLISHING ACT THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS *In the year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Ninety-eight*

#### AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 3 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following section:—

Section: 66. (1) There is established a permanent commission on the status of women consisting of 19 persons as follows: five persons appointed by the governor; four persons appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives; four persons appointed by the president of the senate; and six persons appointed by the caucus of women legislators or its successor organization. Members of the commission shall be drawn from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, sexual orientation and socio-economic backgrounds from throughout the commonwealth and shall have had experience working toward the improvement of the status of women in society. Members shall be subject to the provisions of chapter 268A as they apply to special state employees.

(2) (a) Members shall serve terms of three years and until their successors are appointed.

(b) Vacancies in the membership of the commission shall be filled by the original appointing authority for the balance of the unexpired term.

(c) Appointments shall be made in consultation with women's organizations. Nominations shall be solicited between August 1 and September 16 of each year through an open application process using a uniform application that is widely distributed throughout the state.

(d) The commission shall elect from among its members a chair, a vice chair, a treasurer and any other officers it deems necessary.

(e) The members of the commission shall receive no compensation for their services, but shall be reimbursed for any usual and customary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

(3) The commission shall conduct an ongoing study of all matters concerning women and shall be guided by the tenets of the Platform for Action of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China in September, 1995. In furtherance of that responsibility, the commission shall: (a) study, review and report on the status of women in the Commonwealth; (b) inform leaders of business, education, health care, state and local governments and the communications media of issues pertaining to women; (c) serve as a liaison between government and private interest groups concerned with issues affecting women; (d) serve as a clearinghouse for information on issues pertaining to women; (e) identify and

recommend qualified women for appointive positions at all levels of government, including boards and commissions, as the commission deems necessary and appropriate; (f) assess programs and practices in all state agencies as they affect women, as the commission deems necessary and appropriate; (g) advise executive and legislative bodies on the effect on women of proposed legislation, as the commission deems necessary and appropriate; and (h) promote and facilitate collaboration among local women's commissions and among women's organizations in the state, as the commission deems necessary and appropriate. The commission shall annually, on or before June 2, report the results of its findings and activities of the preceding year and its recommendations to the governor and to the clerks of the senate and House of Representatives.

(4) The powers of the commission shall include but not be limited to the following: (a) to use such voluntary and uncompensated services of private individuals, agencies and organizations as may from time to time be offered and needed; (b) to recommend policies and make recommendations to agencies and officers of the state and local subdivisions of government to effectuate the purposes of subsection (3); (c) to select an executive director and to acquire adequate staff to perform its duties, subject to appropriation; (d) to establish and maintain such offices as it may deem necessary, subject to appropriation; (e) to enact bylaws for its own governance; and (f) to hold regular, public meetings and to hold fact-finding hearings and other public forums as it may deem necessary.

(5) The commission shall meet once every month, except for the months of July and August at members' discretion. The (i) governor, (ii) speaker of the House of Representatives, (iii) president of the senate and (iv) designated members of the caucus of women legislators shall be invited to attend the monthly meetings on a rotating basis.

(6) (a) the commission may request from all state agencies such information and assistance as the commission may require.

(b) The commission may accept and solicit funds, including any gifts, donations, grants, or bequests, or any federal funds for any of the purposes of this chapter. Such funds shall be deposited in a separate account with the state treasurer, be received by said treasurer on behalf of the Commonwealth, and be expended by the commission in accordance with law.

SECTION 2. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 66 of chapter 3 of the General Laws, the initial members of the commission on the status of women shall be appointed for the following terms:

(a) The governor shall appoint, on or before November 16, 1998, two members for a term of one year, two members for a term of two years, and one member for a term of three years.

(b) The speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint, on or before November 16, 1998, two members for a term of one year, one member for a term of two years, and one member for a term of three years.

(c) The president of the senate shall appoint, on or before November 16, 1998, two

members for a term of one year, one member for a term of two years, and one member for a term of three years.

(d) The caucus of women legislators or its successor organization shall appoint, on or before November 16, 1998, one member for a term of one year, two members for a term of two years, and three members for a term of three years.

House of Representatives, May 18, 1998

Passed to be enacted, (*signed*) William P. Nagle, Jr., Acting Speaker

In Senate, May 19, 1998

Passed to be enacted, (*signed*) Thomas F. Birmingham, President

May 29, 1998.

Approved, at 12:05 p.m. (*signed*) Argeo Paul Cellucci, Acting Governor

## **APPENDIX B**

### **ESTABLISHING THE BERKSHIRE COUNTY COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 66 of chapter 3 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2000 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the word "necessary", in line 61, the following words:- (g) to appoint members to regional chapters of the commission.

SECTION 2. There is established a permanent commission on the status of women in Berkshire county consisting of 9 persons who are to be appointed by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women. The commission shall conduct an ongoing study of all matters concerning women in Berkshire county. The commission shall report their findings to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women annually, on or before June 2, and recommend solutions to the problems facing the women of Berkshire county. The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women shall make such appointments to the Berkshire commission from a pool of applicants who reside in Berkshire county. (1) Members shall serve a term of 3 years and until their successors are appointed. Commissioners may be reappointed for 2 consecutive terms. After the completion of 2 consecutive terms, former commissioners may reapply to serve on the commission after a year has passed since their last term. The initial members of the Berkshire County Commission on the Status of Women shall be appointed for the following terms: 3 members for a term of one year, 3 members for a term of two years, and 3 members for a term of 3 years. (2) Vacancies in the membership of the commission shall be filled by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women for the balance of the unexpired term. (3) Appointments by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women to the Berkshire County Commission on the Status of Women shall be made in consultation with women's organizations. Nominations shall be solicited between August 1 and September 16 of each year through an open application that is widely distributed

throughout Berkshire county. Members of the commission should be diverse and represent different towns and municipalities in Berkshire county. (4) Members shall serve on the commission as volunteers and will not be compensated. (5) The commission shall elect from among its members a chair, a vice chair, a treasurer and any other officers it deems necessary. (6) The commission shall meet at least 6 times a year, at the members' discretion. Members of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women may attend the meetings of the Berkshire County Commission on the Status of Women. (7) The commission may accept and solicit funds, including any gifts, donations, grants, or bequests, or any federal funds for any of the purposes of this section. Such funds shall be deposited in a separate account to be expended at the discretion of the commission. (8) The powers of the commission shall include but not be limited to the following: a) to use voluntary and uncompensated services of private individuals, agencies and organizations as may from time to time be offered and needed; b) to recommend policies and make recommendations to agencies and officers of the state and local subdivisions of government to effectuate the purposes of the commission; c) to enact bylaws for its own governance; and d) to hold regular, public meetings and to hold fact-finding hearings and other public forums as it may deem necessary.

**APPENDIX C**

**EXECUTIVE ORDER ESTABLISHING COMMISSION ON WOMEN IN BOSTON**



**CITY OF BOSTON ~ MASSACHUSETTS**

**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
RAYMOND L. FLYNN**

**Executive Order**

Whereas, the issues and concerns of all women of all Boston’s neighborhoods, in their cultural and ethnic diversity, continue to be a priority foremost on the agenda of this Administration; and

Whereas, child care, economic justice, women’s health and safety, as well as the concerns about violence against women are paramount to this administration,

Whereas, the women of the city need a vehicle for expressing their opinions and ideas and a place to rely on for information, advocacy, and action,

Whereas, this executive order shall be in effect only until an ordinance is properly enacted,

Therefore, I, Raymond L. Flynn, do hereby order that the following shall take effect immediately.

SECTION 1. There shall be within the Mayor’s office a division to be known as the

Commission on Women which shall be under the charge of an officer, known as the Advisor to the Mayor on Women's Issues (hereinafter the "Advisor"), appointed by the Mayor and who shall serve at the pleasure of the Mayor and who shall have the powers of a department head with respect to execution of contracts and matters of personnel management within said office.

SECTION 2. The Commission shall consist of fourteen members all of whom shall be appointed by the Mayor (and shall be residents of the city). They shall serve for three year terms. Any person appointed to fill a vacancy shall only serve for the unexpired term; and any such appointee shall serve until said appointee's successor is appointed and qualified. The Advisor as herein referred to shall be a member of the Commission ex officio. The Mayor shall appoint a chairperson of the Commission who may, but need not, be his Advisor. Members of the Commission shall serve without compensation.

SECTION 3. The duties of the Commission shall include but are not limited to:

- a. advising the Mayor's Advisor on women's issues;
- b. assisting the Advisor in working with the Office of the Mayor in determining budget and policy priorities;
- c. monitoring and advising other city agencies on women's issues;
- d. designing special projects that affect women which are not currently being implemented by existing city agencies;
- e. performing services in connection with outreach, communication, and liaison to neighborhood women, the women's community, and women's organizations;
- f. working with the Department on Intergovernmental Relations concerning state and federal legislation and programs that are of concern to women;
- g. working with the Office of Affirmative Action to insure that women are represented at all levels of city government;
- h. serving on an interagency task force developed by an affirmative action office;
- i. coordinating the response of city government to issues of concern to women and women's organizations.

SECTION 4. The Commission may promulgate such rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry out the stated objectives of this brief.

---

Raymond L. Flynn

Mayor

City of Boston

August 4, 1987

Date

## APPENDIX D

### The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women Commissioner Application Packet

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW) was enacted by law and established in 1998 to advance Massachusetts' women toward full equality and to promote rights and opportunities for all women. The Commission is an independent state agency that provides a permanent voice for women across Massachusetts.

The Commission is comprised of 19 appointed women who have had prior experience working towards the improvement of the status of women. Commissioners are drawn from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, sexual orientation, and socio-economic backgrounds from throughout the Commonwealth. Appointments are made by the Governor (5), the Senate President (4), the Speaker of the House of Representatives (4), and the Caucus of Women Legislators (6).

The Commission's duties include: studying, reviewing and reporting on the status of women in the Commonwealth; advising executive and legislative bodies on the effect of proposed legislation on women; informing leaders of business, education, health care, state and local governments and communications media of issues pertaining to women; providing referrals and serving as a resource of information on issues pertaining to women; identifying and recommending qualified women for positions at all levels of government; promoting and facilitating collaboration among local women's commissions and among women's organizations in the state; serving as a liaison between government and private interest groups concerned with issues affecting women; and serving as a clearinghouse of information on issues pertaining to women. The Commission meets once a month, except during July and August.

To be considered for appointment by any of the appointing authorities, please submit a completed application form annually between August 15 and September 30. Appointments are typically made in November. Mail the form to: Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, Charles F. Hurley Building, 19 Staniford Street, 6<sup>th</sup> floor, Boston, MA, 02114. A copy of your application will be kept on file and will be forwarded to the appropriate appointing authority(s) when appointments become available. Please remember that information you provide is public and cannot be kept private or confidential.

If you are appointed, your term of office will be no more than three years, depending upon the vacant seat you fill. You will be eligible for reappointment to a full three-year term at the end of your initial term. Commissioners will be considered "special state employees" and will be subject to Chapter 268A, the state conflict of interest law. You will not be compensated for your work, but you are eligible for reimbursement for usual and customary expenses, such as travel.

For more information, contact:

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women  
The Charles F. Hurley Building  
19 Staniford St., 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02114

Phone: 617-626-6520  
Fax: 617-626-6530  
E-Mail: [mcsw@state.ma.us](mailto:mcsw@state.ma.us)  
Web: [www.mass.gov/women](http://www.mass.gov/women)

Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women  
Commissioner Application Form

Instructions: To be considered for appointment by any of the appointing authorities (Governor, Senate President, Speaker of the House, or Caucus of Women Legislators), please fully complete this form. Please note if you would like your application to be forwarded to a specific appointing authority. Applications will be accepted annually between August 15 and September 30. Appointments are made annually in November. A copy of your application will be kept on file and will be forwarded to the appropriate appointing authority(s) when appointments become available.

Mail all three sections of the completed application to: Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, Charles F. Hurley Building, 19 Staniford Street, 6<sup>th</sup> floor, Boston, MA, 02114. For more information call: (617) 626-6520. Please be sure that your name is on each attachment.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Work Address \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone Evening Phone Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Home Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Work Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Home E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Work E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

SECTION 1 – MCSW CRITERIA

1) Please write a statement which addresses the following three questions:

- a. Why are you interested in being appointed to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women?
- b. How have you worked to advance the status of women?
- c. What three issues concerning the women of Massachusetts are you most interested in?

2) The law establishing the Commission calls for its members to be drawn from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, sexual orientation, and socio-economic backgrounds from throughout the Commonwealth. Voluntary information about how your appointment would contribute to these goals is welcomed and encouraged.

3) Will you be able to attend daytime meetings, spend time preparing for meetings, and participate in events and activities outside of regularly scheduled meeting times?

SECTION 2 – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1) Have you ever been employed by the federal, state, or local government? If yes, please list positions and periods of employment:

2) Have you ever been elected or appointed to public office (including other Boards and/or Commissions) in Massachusetts? If yes, please list and include dates:

3) Please list association memberships:

4) Have you been or are you now a registered lobbyist? If yes, please list the principals you represent(ed) and dates:

5) Have you ever been arrested, charged, or indicted for violation of any federal, state, county, or municipal law, regulation, or ordinance (exclude traffic violations for which a fine or civil penalty of \$150 or less was paid)

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, please give details:

6) Is there anything in your background that if made public, would be an embarrassment to you or the Commission?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, please give details:

7) Is there anything else you think we should know about you, your background or your experience?

8) Please list three persons unrelated to you who would support your appointment:

---

9) Please complete the attached biographical form OR attach a copy of your résumé.

### SECTION 3 – CURRICULUM VITAE

Please describe your background and/or experience in the following areas. You may respond to these questions on a separate sheet of paper and attach your answers to the application form. (A résumé may be submitted in lieu of this form.)

1. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND: (Please list schools attended and degrees obtained)

2. WORK EXPERIENCE: (Please list job titles, employers, and job responsibilities)

3. VOLUNTEER AND/OR COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE: (Please list organizations and/or groups that you worked with and describe the nature of your work)

3. ADDITIONAL RELATIVE EXPERIENCE:

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Massachusetts Commission On The Status Of Women**

#### **BYLAWS**

**Amended March 25, 2009**

#### **PREAMBLE**

Pursuant to Clause E of Subsection 4 of Section 66 of Chapter 3 of the General Laws of Massachusetts, the organization and rules of procedure of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women shall be as follows:

#### **ARTICLE I—NAME**

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

#### **ARTICLE II—PURPOSE**

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

- Study, review and report on the status of women in the commonwealth;
- Inform leaders of business, education, health care, state and local governments and the communications media of issues pertaining to women;
- Serve as a liaison between government and private interest groups concerned with issues affecting women;
- Serve as a clearinghouse for information on issues pertaining to women;
- Identify and recommend qualified women for appointive positions at all levels of government, including boards and Commissions, as the Commission deems necessary and appropriate;
- Assess programs and practices in all state agencies as they affect women, as the Commission deems necessary and appropriate;
- Advise executive and legislative bodies on the effect on women of proposed legislation, as the Commission deems necessary and appropriate; and
- Promote and facilitate collaboration among local women's Commissions and among women's organizations in the state, as the Commission deems necessary and appropriate.

#### **ARTICLE III—REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

The Commission shall annually, on or before June 2, report the results of its findings and activities of the preceding year and its recommendations to the Governor and to the clerks of the Senate and House of Representatives.

## **ARTICLE IV—POWERS OF THE COMMISSION**

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

To advise and submit recommendations and policies to the governor, legislature, agencies, and officers of the state and local subdivisions of government on issues relating to women

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;

To select an Executive Director and to acquire adequate staff to perform its duties, subject to appropriation;

To establish and maintain such offices as it may deem necessary, subject to appropriation;

To enact bylaws for its own governance;

To hold regular, public meetings and to hold fact-finding hearings and other public forums as it may deem necessary; and

To actively pursue outside funding opportunities in support of the MCSW's mission.

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

## **ARTICLE V—MEMBERS**

### **SECTION 1. FOUNDING MEMBERS**

The initial members of the Commission on the Status of Women shall be appointed for the following terms:

The Governor shall appoint, on or before November 16, 1998, two members for a term of one year, two members for a term of two years, and one member for a term of three years;

The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint, on or before November 16, 1998, two members for a term of one year, one member for a term of two years, and one member for a term of three years;

The President of the Senate shall appoint, on or before November 16, 1998, two members for a term of one year, one member for a term of two years, and one member for a term of three years;

The Caucus of Women Legislators or its successor organization shall appoint, on or before November 16, 1998, one member for a term of one year, two members for a term of two years, and three members for a term of three years.

### **SECTION 2. MEMBERS**

The Commission shall consist of nineteen persons as follows:

Five persons appointed by the Governor;

Four persons appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives;

Four persons appointed by the president of the Senate; and

Six persons appointed by the Caucus of Women Legislators or its successor organization.

### **SECTION 3. DIVERSITY**

Members of the Commission shall be drawn from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, sexual orientation, and socio-economic backgrounds from throughout the Commonwealth and shall have had experience working toward the improvement of the status of women in society.

### **SECTION 4. MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS**

Members shall be subject to the provisions of chapter 268A of the General Laws as they apply to special state employees.

### **SECTION 5. TERMS OF OFFICE**

A Member shall serve a term of three years duration and until her successor is appointed.

### **SECTION 6. VACANCIES**

Any Commissioner may resign by delivering her written resignation to the Commission at its principal office or to the Chair of the Board. The original appointing authority will be notified and requested to fill the vacancy with a new Commissioner for the balance of the unexpired term.

### **SECTION 7. APPOINTMENTS**

Appointments shall be made in consultation with women's organizations. Nominations shall be solicited between August 1 and September 16 of each year through an open application process using a uniform application that is widely distributed throughout the state.

## **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 of the purposes of the enabling legislation.

### **SECTION 3. ACCOUNTS**

Such funds shall be deposited in a separate account with the state Treasurer, be received by said Treasurer on behalf of the Commonwealth, and expended by the Commission in accordance with the law and the donor or grantors intent.

## **ARTICLE VII—COMPENSATION AND LIABILITY**

### **SECTION 1. COMPENSATION**

The members of the Commission shall receive no 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 this 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, a Vice-Chair, a Treasurer, a Secretary, 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 Commission.

### **SECTION 2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Officers shall be elected annually, at the first meeting of the fiscal year.

### **SECTION 3. OFFICERS' TERM OF OFFICE**

The elected officers shall serve for a term of one year. The elected officers shall not serve more than two 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 and the Executive Committee. The Chair shall present actions to the full Commission for ratification. The Chair shall assure that the legislative mandates of the Commission are carried out as prescribed by the Legislature and as formulated in these by-laws to:

- Call and preside at all meetings of the Commission and of the Executive Board and conduct these in accordance with parliamentary rules;
- Be an ex-officio member of all committees with the exception of the nominating committee;
- Call special meetings when deemed necessary or desirable;
- Set the agenda for Commission and Executive Committee meetings;
- Supervise the work of the Director

Serve as spokesperson for the Commission or direct such representation before the public and governmental bodies. Oversee all recommendations and reports to the Executive and Legislative branches

Perform such other duties as the Commission may prescribe from time to time.

The Chair may appoint a parliamentarian.

### **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.

### **SECTION 3. SECRETARY**

The Secretary shall:

Be responsible for reviewing the minutes of all regular and special meetings of the Commission and of the Executive Board;

Assure that the Commission staff furnish copies of the minutes and of the Treasurer's financial statement to all members within a reasonable length of time prior to the next meeting;

Assure that an attendance roster is maintained for each Commission meeting and committee meeting;

Act as historian to the Commission by assuring that all general correspondence, records of meetings and committees, and business before the Commission is maintained;

Sign such instruments as shall be authorized by the Commission;

Perform all other duties necessary for the maintenance of adequate records, files and communications of the Commission.

### **SECTION 4. TREASURER**

The Treasurer shall:

Ensure that all financial records are maintained and shall oversee budget preparation and reporting.

Monitor the budget and financial records on an ongoing basis and in accordance with the provisions and requirements of the law and state agencies.

Present the Treasurer's report at regular commission meetings

Strategize with the Executive Director and Commission in how to apply for and receive state, local, private and/or individual grants, appropriations and/or gifts in compliance with applicable state laws and regulations in order to further the purposes of the commission

Present an annual financial report to the Commission

Perform all of the duties incident to the office of Treasurer and such other duties as from time to time may be assigned.

## **ARTICLE X—EXECUTIVE BOARD**

### **SECTION 1. COMPOSITION**

The Executive Board shall consist of the elected officers, elected Chairs of the standing committees and the immediate past Chair.

## **SECTION 2. EXECUTIVE BOARD QUORUM**

*Between Commission meetings and whenever deemed necessary and immediate, the Executive Board shall act as the governing body on behalf of the full Commission. A majority of the Executive Board shall constitute a quorum. The decisions of the Executive Board shall be decided by a majority vote of those members present. All business shall be presented to the full Commission for ratification at its next regularly scheduled meeting.*

## **SECTION 3. MEETINGS**

The Executive Board shall meet once every month, except for the months of July and August at the members discretion. Special meetings may be scheduled at the call of the Chair or of two members of the Executive Board for transaction of necessary business, and act in emergencies reporting in writing all business transacted to the Commission.

“Emergencies” as stated above should be defined as business that may arise between meetings, and which, by reason of action delayed until the regular meeting of the Commission, may cause the loss of an opportunity to promote the best interest of the Commission.

## **SECTION 4. POWERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

The Executive Board shall, subject to ratification of the Commission, decide such matters as may come before it between meetings. The Executive Board is empowered to approve expenditures to defray necessary expenses that are incurred between the regular meetings of the membership. All such expenditures shall be subject to the approval of the Commissioners at the next meeting of the Commission. It shall also deal with all matters referred to it by the Commission, including monitoring the MSCW finances and the annual evaluation of the Executive Director.

A written record of all of the business transacted by the Executive Board shall be distributed to the Commissioners at the next Commission meeting.

The Executive Board shall not reverse a previous action of the Commission nor take any action pertaining to the membership or to the duties of the Executive Board or the officers.

## **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**

The 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 Commission for approval for such recommendations to be acted upon.

The standing committees shall include but not be limited to the following:

- a) Budget and Personnel Committee

- b) Legislative and Public Policy Committee
- c) Program and Planning Committee

Only Commissioners may be members of Standing Committees. 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 elected by the members of the individual standing committees at their first meeting of the fiscal year.

There will be co-chairs of the Budget and Personnel Committee, one to chair budget matters, the other to chair personnel matters.

Chairs of standing committees shall be voting members of the Executive Board.

### **SECTION 3. SPECIAL COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES**

The Commission is empowered to appoint committees, taskforces, 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; develop and promote programs and services to women; 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 once every month, except for the months of July and August at the members' discretion. A calendar of dates shall be set at the first meeting of the fiscal year. This calendar of dates shall be mailed to all Commissioners and can be amended by a majority vote of the Commission. The Chair shall designate the time and place of the meetings.

The all-day planning session shall be the last meeting of the fiscal year (June) and shall be devoted to the goals and direction for the next year's workplan.

The first meeting of the fiscal year (Sept) shall be devoted to Officer Elections and approving the workplan for the year.

At each full commission meeting, there shall be reports from the Chairs of each Standing Committee, report of the Executive Director, reports from any temporary task forces, approval of Executive Board actions, as well as financial reports and any other relevant matters.

## **SECTION 2. QUORUM**

A majority of Commissioners currently holding office shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of Commission business.

## **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:

The Chair; or

A majority vote of the Executive Board; or

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 Commissioners is present.

## **SECTION 5. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Observers may attend meetings of the Commission and may be granted the privilege of the floor by vote of the 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.

The Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate and designated members of the Caucus of Legislators shall be invited to attend the monthly meeting on a rotating basis.

## **SECTION 6. 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. The Secretary of the Commission shall maintain a record of attendance at each Commission meeting. After a commissioner's fourth unexcused absence from regularly scheduled meetings of the full Commission the chair will notify the appropriate appointing authority. The Commission's policy on attendance expectations shall be distributed to each new Commissioner upon appointment.

### **ARTICLE XIII—VOTING PRIVILEGES**

At any Commission meeting or committee meeting, each member of the Commission shall be entitled to one vote. The Chair shall not vote except in the event of a tie. There shall be no proxy voting.

### **ARTICLE XIV—EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The executive director, who shall not be a member of the Commission, shall be hired and may be discharged by the Commission.

The director shall be responsible to the commission and shall be supervised by the chair.

### **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 shall govern the actions of the Commission.

### **ARTICLE XVIII – COMMISSIONER EMERITA**

Any Commissioner who serves out three years is eligible to become a Commissioner Emerita. To become a Commissioner Emerita, such Commissioners whose terms have expired may request such title from the Commission's Executive Board, which shall be approved at the Board's discretion.

The purpose of a Commissioner Emerita is to remain connected to the work of the Commission and to continue to participate and have a voice. Commissioner Emeritae may participate in all meetings of the Commission but shall have no voting privileges.

**APPENDIX F**

**MEDIA ADVISORY**

June 9, 2009

**WHAT:** PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

**WHY:** Inaugural Event of Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women (CCICSW) and Swearing In of Commissioners

**WHEN:** Monday, June 15, 2009, 5-6 p.m.

**WHERE:** Barnstable Superior Courthouse (3195 Main Street, Barnstable)

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:**

5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Swearing-In of Commissioners

6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. First Meeting of the Cape Cod & Islands  
Commission on the Status of Women

**WHO:** *Commissioners to be sworn in are:*

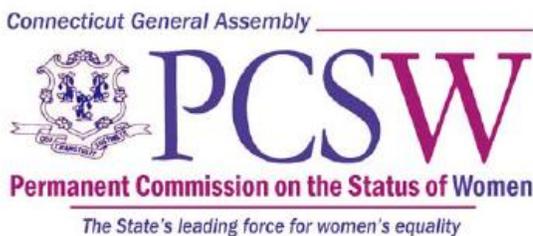
Jan Barton of Barnstable  
Helen Bresnahan of Centerville  
Emily Gold of Falmouth  
Barbara Gookin of Nantucket  
Janet Joakim of Barnstable  
Susan Kadar of Truro  
Catherine King of South Dennis  
Cheryl Osimo of Barnstable  
Pam Pollock of Bourne  
Deborah Thompson of South Dennis  
Janet Ulhar-Tinney of Eastham  
Elaine Cawley Weintraub of West Tisbury  
Evelyn Young of Cotuit

The CCICSW was legislatively established by at the end of the last legislative session and calls for the board of thirteen Commissioners to hear input, collect data, and propose solutions for concerns of the women. The appointees were selected by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW) from a large number of highly qualified and impressive candidates representing strength and diversity in terms of geography, age, professional background and

personal experiences. They share a common commitment to the improvement of the status of women on the Cape and Islands.

**For more information contact:** Kira Dunn, MCSW Executive Director, 617-626-6520

## APPENDIX G



News  
Release

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18-20 Trinity St., Hartford, CT 06106 • 860/240-8300 • [pcsw@cga.ct.gov](mailto:pcsw@cga.ct.gov) • [www.cga.ct.gov/pcsw/](http://www.cga.ct.gov/pcsw/)

CONTACT: Christine Palm, Communications Director at 860/240-8449; or 860/836-2145

For Immediate Release: 6/3/11

### **Gov. Malloy Signs Lupus Bill; PCSW Asked to Name Advisory Panel Member**

HARTFORD – A new bill signed recently by Gov. Dannel Malloy will dramatically help women throughout Connecticut suffering from – and at risk for – lupus, a chronic autoimmune disorder that disproportionately affects women of color.

Public Act No 11-23, An Act Concerning the Establishment of a Lupus Education and Awareness Plan, will establish within the Department of Public Health an inter-agency advisory panel charged with assessing the current state of education on lupus in the state, evaluating educational materials and resources currently available, identifying where improvements can be made and creating a comprehensive lupus awareness and education plan.

The General Assembly's Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), which has worked to raise awareness of the condition and testified in favor of the bill, has been authorized to appoint a member to the advisory panel.

“More than 17,000 Connecticut residents are living with lupus, and 90 percent of them are women,” said Teresa Younger, executive director of the PCSW. “And while this is not a uniquely female condition, it does disproportionately affect women; in addition, African-American women are far more likely to have lupus than are white women. Because of racial inequities in healthcare access, and the fact that all women, regardless of race, pay on average more for healthcare than men do, this disease is of real concern to us. We applaud the General Assembly and the Governor for creating a mechanism for greater understanding and prevention of this dangerous and painful condition.”

*About the PCSW: The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women was formed in 1973 under Sec. 46a of the Connecticut General Statutes to study and improve Connecticut women's economic security, health and safety; to promote consideration of qualified women to leadership positions and to work toward the elimination of gender*

*discrimination. As a non-partisan arm of the General Assembly, the agency monitors, critiques and recommends changes to legislation in order to inform public policy, and assesses programs and practices in all State agencies for their effect on the state's women. The PCSW serves as a liaison between government and its diverse constituents, and convenes stakeholders, including the business, non-profit and educational communities, local governments, and the media, in order to promote awareness of women's issues.*

## APPENDIX H

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