



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

Keeping Members
Better Informed,
Better Connected, and
More Politically Effective

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WomensDemocraticClub.org

Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club 2021 Advocacy Priorities

The Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC) is one of the largest and most active Democratic clubs in the County with hundreds of politically active women and men, including many elected officials. WDC members work together to elect Democrats, keep voters informed, advocate for state and local issues of importance to women and their families, and educate our community on critical issues.

For the 2021 Maryland State legislative session, the WDC Advocacy Committee will advocate for the following priorities to champion issues that disproportionately affect women and their families. In 2021 we will continue our support for a countywide approach to view legislation through a racial and social equity lens. The theme of equity and justice is not only woven into our approach to the upcoming legislative session but has been a strong focus of the club's off-cycle and local advocacy activities.

Finally, the burden on women and their families in Montgomery County resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic is of urgent concern. Therefore, in addition to advocating for the key issue areas outlined, WDC will prioritize legislation that provides programs and funding to alleviate the impact of the pandemic.

Please feel free to direct questions and requests to Diana Conway or JoAnne Koravos. We look forward to an active and productive legislative year!

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AFFORDABLE HOUSING – Chair, Lorna Forde

Core Issue: Evictions, particularly those without just cause, have a devastating impact on residents throughout Montgomery County. The COVID-19 pandemic has exasperated the problem. These evictions can lead to homelessness, job loss, income insecurity, food insecurity, and increased student transiency, among other serious impacts that reverberate throughout the community. The repercussions from these types of evictions are not easily remedied by the County, as there are already 30,000 people -- in large part women age 62+ and single mothers -- on the affordable housing waiting list in Montgomery County. At present, with just 60 days' notice and no reason provided, a tenant can be subject to eviction. It is critical that we ensure that Montgomery County families are safeguarded from destabilizing and unjust displacement. The impact on families cannot be overstated.

WDC Legislative Priorities: Prohibit Evictions without Just Cause from Leased Premises and provide affordable living options for residents with fixed incomes and income insecurity with urgent protections during the pandemic.

WDC supports ending the practice of evictions without just cause, with additional focus on other causes and remedies of housing insecurity, including:

- Requiring that a just cause is stated in the notice to vacate
- Limiting the causes for eviction to reasonable circumstances, such as tenant breach of lease, tenant engaging in illegal activity on the premises, or the unit undergoing extensive renovations
- In the case of reasonable circumstances for eviction, increase the required number of days' notice for households with children
- The pursuit of federal, state, and local funding and mitigation programs addressing housing instability due to income loss due to COVID-19

WDC also urges the passage or reconsideration of [HB0821](#) – *Montgomery County Stable Homes Act MC 12-20*, which we supported in 2020.

AGING – Co-Chairs, JoAnne Koravos and Vera Reublinger

Core Issue: According to the Maryland Department of Aging, older citizens are increasing and individuals between the ages of 80-84 are the fastest growing segment of the population. In fact, through the year 2040, 63.8% of the state's older adults will



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reside in Baltimore City and in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties and the 60+ populations in Maryland will be comprised of 55.7% women vs. 44.3% men. In the U.S., 12.1% of women 65 and older live in poverty, compared to 7.4% of their male peers. Therefore, the economic, physical, and environmental challenges that plague our aging population have a greater impact on Montgomery County's older female residents and their families. Older women (60+) are often burdened with lower incomes, caregiving situations for elderly parents or other vulnerable family members, limited community resources, and high medical and prescription drug cost. Working Seniors (55+) also experience a high percentage of discriminatory practices. In fact, Maryland was listed in the top 10 of states registering the highest employment-to-population ratios for workers age 55 and older with 43% of its 55+ population still working. Furthermore, elderly people, particularly elderly women, are often victims of fraud and abuse. Issues impacting aging women also put a burden on their families.

WDC Legislative Priorities: Support Maryland and Montgomery County's aging female population

WDC supports legislation that will ensure economic security for aging women, both working and retired status; contribute to healthy aging; and support affordable, compassionate elder care, including:

- Stabilizing long-term care insurance premiums
- Preserve and expand affordable rental housing for seniors
- Expanding protections and resources for caregivers
- Increased oversight of nursing homes and assisted living facilities to ensure these facilities are compliant with all legal requirements
- Fair and nondiscriminatory employment practices for aging employees
- Safeguards to eliminate, protect, and remedy, fraud & abuse perpetrated on the senior population
- Supporting the creating, regulation, and funding of aging-in-place programs
- Increase programming for older women to participate in community service, in particular, multi-generational engagement

WDC also urges the passage or reconsideration of [HB0320/SB0702](#) – ***Criminal Law – Exploitation of Vulnerable Adult or Elderly Individual – Undue influence*** that failed to pass in 2020, which we supported in 2020.



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CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY – Chair, Beth Tomasello

Core Issue: In the past, the Criminal Justice/Public Safety subcommittee has focused solely on criminal justice and public safety legislation that only affected women and children. However, in light of recent police killings of Black citizens and the much overdue attention it has drawn to racism in policing and in our criminal justice system as a whole, the Criminal Justice/Public Safety Subcommittee will also be focusing on racial equity in public safety issues at the state and local level. It is the subcommittee's view that the structural racism in policing and over-incarceration is devastating families in Black communities and communities of color and is very much an issue that bears directly on women and children. Accordingly, while the subcommittee will still be focused on legislation affecting women and youth, our work will be broader this year.

WDC Legislative Priorities: Reform of the criminal justice system to address systemic racism from first encounters with police through re-entry and parole, as well as, criminal and violent activity specifically impacting women and their families

WDC supports the following actions at both the State and County levels in the areas of criminal justice reform and violence prevention, as appropriate:

- Override of the Governor's veto of the Women's Prerelease Equity Act that was passed by the General Assembly in 2020.
- Abolition of Juvenile Life Without Parole sentences, and reform of Maryland's parole system to take the final decision out of the Governor's hands.
- Removal of School Resource Officers from all of Maryland's public schools (to be considered jointly with Education subcommittee).
- Restrictions on use-of-force as set forth in the #8CANTWAIT proposals of Campaign Zero.
- Repeal of the Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights (LEOBR).
- Revision of the Maryland Public Information Act to permit disclosure of police disciplinary records
- Abolishing the "reasonableness" standard for judging police use of force and replacing it with a "necessary" standard strengthened with other qualifications and requirements.
- Other legislation that may be proposed in the General Assembly or the County Council that aims to eliminate systemic racism anywhere along the continuum of criminal justice from policing through parole.



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WDC also urges the immediate [veto](#) override of [HB0801/SB0684](#) – ***Correctional Services – Prerelease Unit for Women – Facilities and Services (Gender-Responsive Prerelease Act)***, which was passed by both chambers in 2020.

EDUCATION – Chair, Laura Stewart

Core Issue: Maryland's national ranking for education dipped again in 2019. Less than 45% of elementary and middle school children met English and Math grade standards in the last standardized testing cycle. In Montgomery County, performance was down in seventh-grade math, Algebra 1 and English 10. There is also a severe achievement and opportunity gap, which is weakening our economic prospects. Forty-seven percent (47%) of Montgomery County students have qualified for Free and Reduced Meals at some point in their educational career. We must increase education funding in order to target the persistent inequities in our education system. Montgomery County enrollment continues to surge, adding more than 25,000 students over the last 10 years. Our facilities are aging, and many are over capacity, creating roughly \$1.5 billion in backlogged projects, causing health and safety issues for Montgomery County students, teachers, and staff. Everyone agrees that the education, safety, and social equality of all our children is paramount and will define the future of our state and county. The 2020 Maryland General Assembly recognized the role education plays in the future of the state when they passed the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation. Unfortunately, Gov. Hogan's veto stalled the implementation.

WDC Legislative Priorities: Support the *Immediate Veto Override of Blueprint for Maryland's Future during the 2021 session, support new legislation that will help close the achievement and opportunity gap for our children, and support legislation that provides funding and resources to address schooling in the era of COVID-19.*

WDC strongly supports the implementation of both the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and The Build to Learn Act, as well as other relevant legislation that ensures:

- Full transparency at the state, county, and local level of how and to whom funds are allocated and for what purpose.
- The availability of Educational Services, including alternative educational services and school discipline, especially within public schools with a high concentration of children living in poverty.



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- The availability of Child Care Services, including laws that ensure that childcare facilities are compliant and safe.
- Child Safety, including violence against children and child protective services.
- Safe living standards, including food security, visitation rules that may affect the well-being of the child/children who are aging out of foster care, etc.
- All schools have the resources they need to provide educational opportunity equally for all students in the era of COVID-19, or reimbursement for relevant costs during and after the pandemic.

WDC strongly urges the *immediate* [veto](#) override of [HB1300/SB1000](#) – *The Blueprint for Maryland's Future*, which we supported and passed both chambers in 2020.

ENVIRONMENT – Chair, JoAnne Koravos

Core Issue: Environmental equity is a new focus for WDC. Last session we focused on regulations governing the safe disposal of artificial/synthetic turf (synturf), which we will continue to pursue. In 2021, we are expanding our advocacy into the general area of environmental equity and community resilience. Every resident should have an equal opportunity to protect their families from the negative impact of environmental hazards and mismanagement. In addition, Maryland and Montgomery County need to have the resilience and sustained ability to have access to available resources to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations relating to the environment, i.e. recovery, adaptation, and growth after a disaster strikes.

WDC Legislative Priorities: Initiatives creating environmental equity and community resilience, including the responsible disposal of synturf

WDC urges state support for regulations governing the safe and responsible disposal of Synturf, and the creation of programs focused on equal environmental protections and sustainable resources, including:

- Ensuring that all materials that make up synturf are disposed of in a responsible manner
- Requiring transparency and accountability regarding the disposal of synturf, i.e. chain of custody documentation
- Protections from the negative impact of environmental hazards, disaster, or pollution.



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- Responsible mitigation efforts dealing with water quality, zero-waste initiative, forest conservation, and pesticide-use reduction.

WDC urges the passage or reconsideration of [HB1547](#) – *Synthetic Turf and Turf Infill – Producer Responsibility* and [HB1098](#) – *Playground and Athletic Field Surfaces – Authorization Preferences, and Prohibitions*, which we supported in 2020.

HEALTH – Chair, Margaret Hadley, RN, MS

Core Issue: All Marylanders should have access to cost effective and efficient health care and health insurance. Under the ACA Maryland made great strides in meeting that goal. But health care and health insurance are still out of financial reach for many Marylanders, especially women and those who have left the work force in record high numbers due to Covid-19 resulting in loss of employer based health insurance. Women in disadvantaged communities (and their children) are especially vulnerable. If the Supreme Court overturns the ACA even more Marylanders could lose access to affordable health care coverage that includes the essential health benefits. Even when low-income families have access to healthcare, co-pays and prescription drug costs can be unmanageable. In fact, one in four Americans aged 50 and over who have taken a prescription drug in the past five years said they did not fill a prescription written by their doctor in the past two years. Cost is reported as a main deterrent. Another serious issue in the U.S. and in Maryland is maternal death rates, which are on the rise, particularly for women of color. Researchers have found that implicit bias is significantly related to patient-provider interactions, treatment decisions, treatment adherence, and patient health outcomes.

WDC Legislative Priorities: Provide affordable and accessible healthcare equally for all residents regardless of their gender, race, age, or economic situation.

WDC supports the continuation and creation of programs and initiatives that will provide affordable, accessible, effective, and efficient health care equally to all residents including legislation:

- Designed to improve/protect provisions of the ACA especially access to Medicaid.
- That would fund Community Health initiatives in underserved communities aimed at ameliorating health disparities in vulnerable populations.



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- That would prevent or protect Marylanders from health issues related to environmental degradation.
- Supports and encourages behaviors that thwart the spread of COVID-19 in all populations across the county and state.
- That improves funding for community mental health programs.

WORKING FAMILIES AND ECONOMIC SECURITY – Chair, Ginger Macomber

Core Issue: According to the 2018 Report from the *Montgomery County Commission for Women*, women account for 44 % of the full-time civilian workforce living in Montgomery County, but earn only 82% of what their male counterparts earn. Although this compares favorably with 77% for Maryland women and 72% for women nationally, this pay gap has been persistent.

Some recent studies have equated this pay gap to a motherhood penalty caused by the lack of paid maternity, family, and sick leave; affordable quality childcare; and society's expectations that women should have the primary responsibility for child and elder care. A study by the *National Women's Law Center* found that in Maryland, mothers are paid 76 cents for every dollar paid to fathers.

The *Commission for Women* also found that the number of women living in poverty in Montgomery County has been increasing. Between 2007 and 2017, more than 16,500 women joined the ranks of those living below the poverty level – an increase of 66%. Single-parent households headed by a woman had the lowest median incomes and were more likely to be living below the self-sufficiency standard. This increase in poverty for working women is partially attributable to the higher proportion of women in lower-paying service jobs without guaranteed pay, work hours or benefits.

Emerging data is documenting that women have disproportionately suffered pandemic-related job losses. Nationally, since February 2020, women have lost nearly 5.8 million net jobs, accounting for 53.9% of the overall net job loss since the start of the crisis. In addition, women are more likely to be essential workers who are on the frontlines of fighting the virus and most likely to be exposed to its ravaging effects. According to a *New York Times* analysis, one in three jobs held by women has been designated as essential. This work is often underpaid and unseen – yet critical to keeping our country running and to caring for our most vulnerable citizens.



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WDC Legislative Priorities: Provide equal opportunities and economic security for working women and their families. WDC urges the State Legislature to enact legislation that will ensure economic security for working families, reduce the pay gap caused by the “motherhood penalty,” support essential workers, assist those who have lost their jobs or have reduced incomes because of the pandemic, and ensure no one working fulltime is living in poverty, including legislation that provides for:

- Fair pay and labor protections for essential workers
- Fair work practices
- Living wage
- Fair employee leave policies (including sick leave, family leave, and parental leave)
- Women’s equality in the workplace
- Affordable quality childcare

WDC also urges the passage of ***The Time to Care Act (Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program)*** that failed to pass out of the assigned House and Senate Committees in 2020 ([HB0839/SB0539](#)). Passage of this legislation will provide up to twelve weeks of *paid* leave to an individual who is taking leave to care for a newborn or newly adopted child, a family member with a serious health condition, themselves if they have a serious health condition, or a service member who is next-of-kin, or has a specified need because of the military deployment of a family member. Federal employees recently received this benefit.

WDC has been very active in support of issues impacting women and their families in the area of ***racial justice and equity***, particularly in the area of racial equity within criminal justice reform (see the Criminal Justice and Public Safety subcommittee). In addition, WDC is a leader in the effort to repeal and replace the **Maryland State Song**. Maryland is the only State to have a Confederate symbol as its State Song. The Southern Poverty Law Center includes Maryland's State Song on its [list of shame](#) as a public symbol of the Confederacy. On July 28, 2020, the Montgomery County Council unanimously passed a [Resolution](#) calling on the Maryland General Assembly to replace the State Song *Maryland, My Maryland* and discourage its use at official Montgomery County events including public school events and graduations. The Montgomery County Democratic Party Central Committee also passed a resolution that strongly supports the efforts to repeal *Maryland, My Maryland* as our State Song and urges the Maryland General Assembly to repeal this song in the 2021 legislative session. Therefore, WDC strongly urges the State Legislature to enact legislation that will immediately repeal *Maryland, My Maryland* as our State song regardless of whether a replacement has been chosen.