



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD  
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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

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WomensDemocraticClub.org

## Women's Democratic Club *2020 Advocacy Priorities*

The Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC) is one of the largest and most active Democratic Clubs in our County with more than 600 politically active women and men, including many elected officials. WDC members work together to elect Democrats, keep voters informed, advocate on state and local issues of importance to women and families, and educate our community on critical issues.

For the 2020 legislative session, the WDC Advocacy Committee will advocate for the following priorities in an effort to champion issues that disproportionately affect women and their families. WDC strongly supports the county-wide approach to view legislation through a racial and social equity lens.

### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING** – Co-Chairs, Lorna Forde and Leslie Milano

**Core Issue:** Evictions, particularly those without just cause, have a devastating impact on residents throughout Montgomery County. 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 Priority: Prohibit Evictions without Just Cause from Leased Premises**

WDC supports ending the practice of evictions without just cause, including:

- Require that a just cause is stated in the notice to vacate
- Limit 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

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**AGING** – Chair, JoAnne Koravos

**Core Issue:** Among our aging population, women increasingly outnumber men. 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.

**WDC Legislative Priority: Support Maryland's Aging Female Population**

WDC urges the state to enact legislation that will ensure economic security for our growing elderly population, especially elderly women, both working and retired; contribute to healthy aging; and support affordable, compassionate elder care, including:

- Stabilize long-term care insurance premiums
- Preserve and expand affordable rental housing for seniors
- Expand protections and resources for caregivers
- Increase oversight of nursing homes to ensure these facilities are compliant with all legal requirements
- Ensure fair and nondiscriminatory employment practices for aging employees
- Eliminate, protect, and remedy, fraud & abuse perpetrated on the senior population
- Support the ability of women to age in place
- Increase programming for older women to participate in community service, in particular, multi-generational engagement

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY**– Chair, Beth Tomasello

**Core Issue:** There are currently no stand-alone pre-release centers for incarcerated women in Maryland. The sole pre-release center for women, located in Baltimore, was closed in 2009 for budgetary reasons. The property is currently vacant. WDC supports legislation to require the re-opening of a stand-alone pre-release center for Maryland's incarcerated women. There are currently 7 pre-release centers for incarcerated men in Maryland. Women who have achieved pre-release status are currently housed in the maximum-security unit at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women in Jessup. Housing women in pre-release in a maximum-security prison has a number of ramifications that render the women's treatment unequal (a violation of constitutional guarantees under the Equal Protection Clause and the Maryland Equal Rights Act) and not genuine pre-release. Adequate pre-release is the cornerstone of successful re-integration into society, and incarcerated women in Maryland are not being afforded an equal opportunity to re-integrate successfully. Given that the vast majority of these women are single heads of households, the future of the women and their children depend on successful reintegration.



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**WDC Legislative Priority: Open a Pre-Release Center for Women in Maryland**

WDC urges state support to require that the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) re-open a pre-release center for women in Maryland. Our desired outcomes are:

- Passage of the legislation requiring the opening of a pre-release center for women in Maryland within a reasonable timeframe
- A fair and thorough Fiscal Note that addresses the possibility and cost of rehabbing existing vacant property for a pre-release center

**ENVIRONMENT**– Chair, Amanda Farber

**Core Issue:** There are currently no laws or regulations regarding the disposal of artificial/synthetic turf fields (synturf). These fields contain significant and well-documented toxicities in unknown, undisclosed quantities and combinations. Synturf contains neurotoxins like lead and mercury, 52 human carcinogens, numerous endocrine disruptors, and scores of other known toxins. Many of these are bio-accumulative and contribute to the toxic load to which Maryland families are exposed through inhalation, ingestion, and dermal uptake. Exposure occurs both during synturf's 8-10 year life as a sports field as well as through the continued release of toxic contamination under currently allowed disposal methods. This includes open-air dumping as occurred at Bird River in White Marsh, MD. A used synturf represents 250 tons of plastic waste, per field, typically with 40,000 shredded waste tires. Industry describes its fields as 'recyclable' however there are no such facilities in the U.S. As the number of fields increases so does the need to address this disposal challenge and the risk it presents for the health and the air and water quality of Maryland families. The disposal of synturf should be regulated to prohibit such uncontrolled contamination.

**WDC Legislative Priority: Responsible Disposal of Synturf**

WDC urges state support to regulate the disposal of synturf in the following ways:

- Require transparency and accountability regarding the disposal of synturf
- Require disposal chain-of-custody documentation
- Ensure that all materials that make up synturf are disposed of in a responsible manner

**GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION**– Chair, Claudia Schwartz

**Core Issue:** Gun violence, including suicide and domestic violence, is an ongoing threat to the health and safety of all Marylanders, and is the second leading cause of death among American children and teens. American women are 16 times more likely to be shot and killed with a gun than women in other high-income countries.



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Rifles and shotguns pose a serious threat to public safety in Maryland. While Maryland's strong gun violence protection laws already require a background check on all handgun sales in the state, by both licensed and unlicensed sellers, Maryland long gun purchasers are still able to buy rifles and shotguns from unlicensed sellers without undergoing a background check.

**WDC Legislative Priority: Close the Background Check Loophole for All Long Gun Sales**

WDC urges state support to close the background check gap, including:

- Require background checks for all rifle and shotgun sales, including unlicensed sales, such as Internet transactions.
- Include common-sense, tailored exceptions to the background check requirement for lawful activity, such as sport shooting at gun ranges, and lawful hunting and trapping

**EDUCATION**– Chair, Laura Stewart

**Core Issue:** Maryland is no longer ranking as high in U.S. education rankings as we once were. Montgomery County standardized state test scores in Algebra and Grade 10 English Language Arts decreased last year. 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.

**WDC Legislative Priority: Support the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and the Build to Learn Act.**

WDC urges state support for The Blueprint for Maryland's Future and The Build to Learn Act, which will increase the state's education funding for Montgomery County students and improve educational facilities.

- We expect that these funds will account for the increasing needs in our county caused by continued population growth and the increasing number of students in poverty who are entering the school system
- These funds should be allocated in addition to the current budget so that we may meet the needs of all students in Montgomery County
- There should be adequate state and local accountability, so that the funds are used appropriately



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**HEALTH** – Chair, Sharon Cranford

**Core Issue:** Maternal death rates are on the rise in the United States. Maryland's maternal deaths have increased as well, particularly for women of color. Implicit bias is the bias in judgment and/or behavior that results from subtle cognitive processes operating at a level below conscious awareness and without intentional control. Researchers have found that implicit bias is significantly related to patient-provider interactions, treatment decisions, treatment adherence, and patient health outcomes.

**WDC Legislative Priority: Require Implicit Bias Training for Healthcare Providers**

WDC urges the state to require implicit bias training for healthcare providers throughout Maryland to address documented disparities in medical outcomes based on race and other factors, including:

- Require licensing boards to adopt regulations mandating implicit bias training for clinicians
- Ensure organizations that certify and provide continuing education classes for doctors, surgeons, nurses, and physician assistants include curriculum on implicit bias and bias-reducing strategies

**WORKING FAMILIES** – Chair, Leslie Milano

**Core Issue:** Medical debt affects tens of millions of consumers. It is one of the most prevalent types of consumer debt with one in five Americans receiving contact by a debt collector due to an unpaid healthcare bill. Medical debt has devastated many families with close to 60% of bankruptcy filers affirming that medical debt was a contributor to their bankruptcy.

**WDC Legislative Priority: Strengthen Medical Debt Collection Protections**

WDC urges the state to pass legislation that protects Maryland families from financial ruin due to medical debt collections, including:

- Require that any services provided at an in-network hospital be eligible for the hospital's financial assistance policy (FAP)
- Prohibit home foreclosure based on a medical debt lien
- Prohibit lawsuits or wage garnishment to collect medical debt if a consumer is eligible for free or discounted care
- Prohibit collection of medical debt while health insurance appeals are underway
- Limit the interest rate that can be charged on medical debts
- Prohibit credit reporting on medical debts for at least the first 180 days