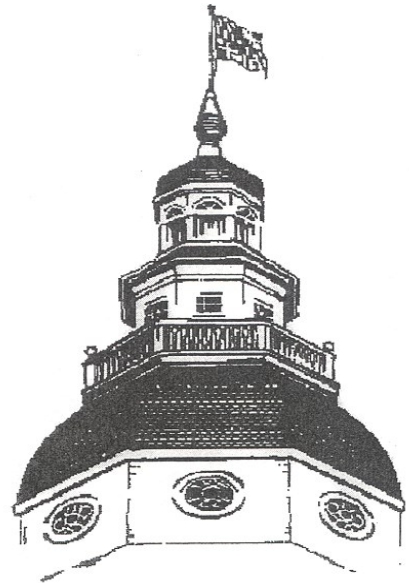


Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women *2016*



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE
2016 MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR WOMEN
CONTACT:

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www.mdlegagendaforwomen.org

Overview

The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) is a statewide coalition of women's groups and individuals formed to provide a non-partisan, independent voice for Maryland women and families. The coalition advocates for progressive legislation and policies that promote and protect the well-being of Maryland women and their families and provide them opportunities to develop their full potential.

This initiative is a response to the Maryland Commission for Women's decision in August of 2004 to absorb the Legislative Agenda for Maryland Women (LAMW) into its Legislative and Public Policy Committee. For twelve years, the Legislative Agenda for Maryland Women, a statewide coalition effort, supported successful passage of dozens of bills that have improved the quality of life for Maryland's women and families. Many leaders of the new initiative served on the LAMW steering committee.

Our Vision

Maryland women and their families have a right, by law, to an adequate and sustainable quality of life and an opportunity to develop their full potential.

Guiding Principles

- An adequate standard of living regardless of ability to work or achieve financial independence
- Personal safety at home, school and the workplace
- Freedom from discrimination in Maryland's economic, educational, judicial, political, and social system
- Equal access to quality health care and reproductive services
- Safe and affordable child and dependent care
- A quality, public education
- Equitable and responsible implementation and enforcement of rights and protections provided by existing law
- Elimination of discriminatory policies and practices based on age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities and attributes, race, and sexual orientation
- Family-friendly employment practices

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 Potomac Valley Section, National Council of Negro Women, Inc.
 S.O.S. (Speak Out Survivors) Coalition
 Southern Prince George's Business and Professional Women
 The Rest of A Life (TROAL)
 United Democratic Women of Maryland, Inc.
 Woman's Democratic Club of Montgomery County
 Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc.
 Younger Women's Task Force, Baltimore Chapter

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**The names of individuals and organizational supporters that may only support some components of the agenda that pertain to their mission and work.*

2016 Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women

Agenda Process and Selection

In November, MLAW hosted its Fall Agenda Conference. Advocacy and women's groups were invited to present legislative initiatives for consideration. The criteria for initiatives to be presented at the Conference were:

- Must address a women's issue
- Must be able to be addressed through the legislative process
- Must have an identifiable, sustainable lead group that agrees to shepherd the legislation
- Must have a sponsor
- Must have a reasonable expectation of success

Following a successful conference, the Board of Directors met to review the legislation and ensure that it met the criteria. Bills that met the criteria were placed on a ballot, which was distributed to the MLAW membership. Members were asked to vote for the initiatives that would comprise the **2016 Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women**.

2016 Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women

Issues and Initiatives

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Equal Pay for Equal Work

Bill Number: HB1003/SB481

Synopsis: Despite both federal and state efforts to curb this practice, women in Maryland earn, on average just 85 cents for every dollar earned by men in comparable jobs – this bill will help to close the prevailing loop hopes that allow this inequity to persist.

Committee(s): Senate Finance
House Economic Matters

Bill Sponsor(s): Senator Susan Lee, 301-858-3124
Delegate Kris Valderrama, 410-841-3210

Lead Group(s): Maryland Working Families
Dante Bishop, 240-291-7052

Background: Pay discrimination remains a persistent problem in the workforce. In Maryland, on average, women working full-time, year-round typically earn about 85.5 cents for every dollar earned by men. Asian American women in Maryland earn only 84.2 cents for every dollar earned by white, non-Hispanic men, and the situation is even worse for African American women (69.7 cents) and Latinas (46.6 cents).

The 14.5 cent wage gap that Maryland women face, while smaller than the national wage gap, still significantly diminishes their earning power. Maryland women's median earnings are only \$50,211, in comparison to median earnings for men of \$58,746. That is a difference of a whopping \$8,535.

The Pay Equity legislation provides crucial protections for workers to discuss their wages without fear of retaliation. It removes barriers for women to enter higher paying jobs; bars employers from providing less favorable opportunities based on sex or gender identity and updates Maryland's Equal Pay for Same Work law by including gender identity as a protected category. The Equal Pay for Equal Work Act, is the next important step to strengthen Maryland's Equal Pay Act and give women the tools they need to fight back against pay discrimination.

Fair Scheduling, Wages, and Benefits Act

Bill Number: HB1175/SB664

Synopsis: This bill will provide hourly workers some measure of predictability in their schedules so they can plan for and balance their non-work responsibilities by incentivizing employers to build stable, predictable, family-friendly schedules and fairly compensate employees for the time they make available to their employers.

Committee(s): Senate Finance
House Economic Matters

Bill Sponsor(s): Senator Joanne C. Benson, 301-858-3148
Delegate Jeff Waldstreicher, 410-841-3130

Lead Group(s): Maryland Working Families
Dante Bishop, 240-291-7052

Background: One of the biggest obstacles for women being able to create economic and family stability is having a predictable schedule. Employers increasingly schedule workers on-call with no guarantee of work or pay, cancel shifts at the last minute, or send workers home early without compensation. Whether she's an hourly worker or a highly-skilled professional, scheduling predictability can reduce both financial and emotional stress on women who must juggle work and family.

This demand for constant availability has a particularly high impact on the more than 410,000 hourly workers in Maryland who have kids at home, and the 77,000 hourly workers balancing more than one job. Today half of Maryland's workforce is paid by the hour—that's over 1.3 million residents of the state with no protection against abusive scheduling. When workers cannot predict their work hours or their pay and have no voice in their schedules, they can't arrange child care, secure a second job, or complete the training they need to advance their careers.

Women make up 49 percent of Maryland's workforce, and more than 300,000 households in the state are led by women. This bill will provide hourly workers some measure of predictability in their schedules so they can plan for and balance their non-work responsibilities. This will provide crucial support to the women of our state, as nearly 70% of Maryland's low-wage workers – those making \$10.10 or less an hour – are in fact women. This critical legislation will incentivize employers to build stable, predictable, family-friendly schedules and fairly compensate employees for the time that make available to their employers.

Labor and Employment—Maryland Healthy Working Families Act

Bill Number: HB580/SB472

Synopsis: The proposed legislation would enable Maryland workers to earn a limited number of annual paid sick and safe days from their employer.

Committee(s): Senate Finance
House Economic Matters

Bill Sponsor(s): Senator Catherine Pugh, 410-841-3656
Delegate Luke Clippinger, 410-841-3303

Lead Group(s): Job Opportunities Task Force
Melissa Broome, Deputy Director
410-234-8046, melissa@jotf.org

Background: Everyone gets sick and everyone deserves time to recover without risking their economic stability, yet 40 percent of American workers – and nearly 80 percent of low-wage workers – are unable to earn paid sick days. In Maryland, more than 700,000 of our neighbors are forced to make impossible choices: go to work sick, send an ill child to school or daycare, or stay home and sacrifice much-needed income or, worse, risk job loss.

This issue has an especially severe impact on women. Three-quarters of mothers are now in the labor force (half are the primary breadwinners for their families), and yet our laws do not reflect the reality of today's working families. Working women are more likely to have significant caregiving responsibilities – including caring for elderly parents, children or ill spouses/partners – yet women-dominated industries are among the least likely to offer paid sick days.

Half of working mothers miss work when their child gets sick. Of these mothers, half do not get paid when they take this time off. Among low-income working mothers, two in three report losing pay when they or a family member gets sick. Without this basic workplace benefit, women are often left with no choice but to forego pay in order to meet their families' health care needs. **Working women need a basic workplace standard of paid sick days so they don't have to choose between keeping their job and caring for a sick child or family member.**

The proposed legislation, which will be introduced for the fourth consecutive year in 2016, enables workers to earn a limited number of annual paid sick and safe days from their employer, up to seven days a year for a full-time employee. Workers would begin accruing hours from the start of employment but employers may require a three-month waiting period before allowing employees to use their accrued hours. The "safe time" component of the legislation requires employers to allow women who have been victims of domestic abuse or sexual assault to use their accrued paid sick leave to care for their health after these incidents or to seek legal protections or new housing.

Criminal Law—Stalking and Harassment

Bill Number: HB155/SB278

Synopsis: Stalking can be a very scary form of intimate partner abuse. Prosecutors indicate the way stalking is defined makes it virtually impossible to obtain convictions. Updating and revising the laws of stalking, harassment and misuse of electronic communication will assist in holding perpetrators of these acts accountable criminally and increase safety for victims of domestic violence.

Committee(s): Senate Judicial Proceedings
House Judiciary

Bill Sponsor(s): Delegate Kathleen Dumais, 410-841-3052
Senator Susan Lee, 410-841-3124

Lead Group(s): Governor's Family Violence Council
Dorothy Lennig, 410-554-8460
Maryland States Attorney's Association
Steve Kroll, 410-203-9881

Background: While the Maryland Code defines crimes of stalking, harassment, telephone misuse, and misuse of electronic communication, Maryland prosecutors have difficulty prosecuting these cases. State's attorneys report that they have difficulty obtaining a conviction due to the definitions in Maryland's Criminal Law Statutes, § 3-801 – Course of Conduct, 3-802 - Stalking, 3-803 - Harassment, 3-805 – Misuse of Electronic Communication or Interactive Computer Service. In addition, the Peace Order statute does not currently include electronic means as a form of abuse.

Domestic violence abusers often stalk or harass their victims. They use social media to threaten, shame, scare, and track their victims. They use GPS tracking mechanisms on cell phones in order to follow or control their victims. They call/text their victims hundreds of times a day to find out where their victims are and what they are doing. They leave haunting notes, dead flowers, or threatening pictures at the victim's house, in her mailbox, or on her car. Additionally, in essence, technology is moving faster than our statutes. By updating the stalking and other statutes, prosecutors may be able to hold abusers accountable for this scary and controlling behavior. On the civil side, those people seeking a peace order may be better able to achieve safety if the statute is revised to add commonly used electronic acts to abuse

Peace Orders—Ground for Relief

Bill Number: HB314/SB346

Synopsis: Stalking can be a very scary form of intimate partner abuse. Prosecutors indicate the way stalking is defined makes it virtually impossible to obtain convictions. Updating and revising the laws of stalking, harassment and misuse of electronic communication will assist in holding perpetrators of these acts accountable criminally and increase safety for victims of domestic violence.

Committee(s): Senate Judicial Proceedings
House Judiciary

Bill Sponsor(s): Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, 410-841-3471
Senator Victor Ramirez, 410-841-3745

Lead Group(s): Governor's Family Violence Council
Dorothy Lennig, 410-554-8460
Maryland States Attorney's Association
Steve Kroll, 410-203-9881

Background: While the Maryland Code defines crimes of stalking, harassment, telephone misuse, and misuse of electronic communication, Maryland prosecutors have difficulty prosecuting these cases. State's attorneys report that they have difficulty obtaining a conviction due to the definitions in Maryland's Criminal Law Statutes, § 3-801 – Course of Conduct, 3-802 - Stalking, 3-803 - Harassment, 3-805 – Misuse of Electronic Communication or Interactive Computer Service. In addition, the Peace Order statute does not currently include electronic means as a form of abuse.

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Family Law—Child Conceived Without Consent—Termination of Parental Rights

Bill Number: HB646/SB593

Synopsis: A bill to terminate the parental rights of rapists when a child is conceived as a result of rape.

Committee(s): Senate Judicial Proceedings
House Judiciary

Bill Sponsor(s): Senator Jamie Raskin, 410-841-3634
Delegate Kathleen Dumais, 410-841-3052

Lead Group(s): Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Lisae C. Jordan, 443-995-5544

Background: Sexual assault continues to disproportionately impact women. Any estimate of the incidence of sexual assault is just that – an estimate – rape, child sexual abuse, and other sexual offenses continues to be one of the most underreported crimes in America. However, we do know that one out of every 8 adult women, or about 260,000 adult women in Maryland, has been the victim of forcible rape sometime in her lifetime. Ruggiero, K.J. & Kilpatrick, D. G. (2003), Rape in Maryland: A Report to the State. Charleston, SC: National Violence Against Women Prevention Research Center, Medical University of South Carolina.

A longitudinal study of rape-related pregnancy in the U.S., published in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology (1996, vol. 175, pp. 320-325), found that 5% of rape victims of reproductive age (age 12-45) became pregnant as a result of rape, with the majority of pregnancies in adolescents.

The Rape Survivor Family Protection Act would give rape victims a process to terminate parental rights of rapists when a child is conceived as result of rape. This bill has been redrafted to comply with the new 2015 federal Rape Survivor Child Custody Act. This new federal law provides additional grant funding to states with laws addressing termination of parental rights of rapists. Additional procedural protections were also added to the bill.

Victims would be required to meet a clear and convincing standard of evidence. This is the same standard used for other termination of parental rights cases – no higher, no lower.

Criminal Procedure—Postconviction Review—Conviction of Human Trafficking Victim

Bill Number: HB623/SB866

Synopsis: This bill expands Maryland’s “vacating convictions” law to include survivors of labor trafficking, and increases the amount of convictions eligible for vacatur.

Committee(s): Senate Judicial Proceedings
House Judiciary

Bill Sponsor(s): Senator Susan Lee, (301) 858-3124
Delegate Kathleen Dumais, 410-841-3052

Lead Group(s): The Human Trafficking Project of the Civil Advocacy Clinic at the University of Baltimore School of Law
Jessica Emerson, (410) 837-5709, jemerson@ubalt.edu

Background: Victims of human trafficking, the majority of whom are female, are commonly arrested and convicted for crimes they were forced to engage in by their traffickers. Survivors who have criminal records resulting from having been trafficked often experience difficulties obtaining safe housing and gainful employment, which keeps them trapped in poverty and vulnerable to continued exploitation.

Responding to this injustice, the Maryland Legislature passed a law in 2011 allowing survivors of sex trafficking, who are commonly arrested for prostitution, to vacate, or, set aside those convictions. In the years since this bill was enacted, however, advocates working with survivors of sex trafficking have documented the need for Maryland’s vacatur law to apply to crimes other than prostitution, as it is common for these individuals to have convictions for trafficking-related crimes other than prostitution. Additionally, advocates working with survivors of labor trafficking have also documented forced criminal activity among their clients. However, the current law does not allow for the vacatur of criminal convictions stemming from any forced labor other than prostitution.

The proposed legislation will expand Maryland’s current vacatur law to explicitly apply to survivors of labor trafficking, as well as increase the amount of crimes eligible for vacatur. This will allow all survivors of trafficking to more easily heal from the wounds of their victimization by reducing the collateral consequences associated with a criminal record stemming from acts they were forced to commit by their traffickers.

Labor and Employment—Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program— Establishment

Bill Number: HB740/SB485

Synopsis: This bill establishes a Family and Medical Leave Insurance Fund, which allows workers to take time away from work to deal with a serious personal or family illness or to care for a new child without jeopardizing their economic security.

Committee(s): House Economic Matters
Senate Finance

Bill Sponsor(s): Delegate Ariana Kelly, 301-858-3642
Senator Catherine Pugh, 410-841-3656

Lead Group(s): NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland, 301-565-4154

Background: The birth of a child or the serious illness of yourself or a loved one often cause significant economic hardship for women, and are leading causes of poverty spells in Maryland. This is because - while the vast majority of women are in the workforce and families are dependent on women's regular incomes - only 13% of the workforce has access to paid maternity leave, and an even smaller percentage can access paid care-giving leave. Without paid maternity leave, 23% of women return to work less than two weeks after childbirth, causing long-term health and economic problems for parent and child. This bill is based on very successful existing state programs in New Jersey, Rhode Island and California.

This bill creates a state-run insurance fund administered by the Division of Unemployment Insurance that would provide up to 12 weeks of partial wage replacement for those that are taking unpaid leave to care for a new child, a family member with a serious health condition, the employee's own serious health condition, or a qualifying exigency arising out of a family member's military deployment.

Demonstrate Your Womanpower with MLAW

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO TAKE ACTION ON LEGISLATION

MLAW (Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women) is a statewide group of organizations and individuals working to provide an independent, non-partisan voice advocating for critical legislation and policies affecting women and their families. Visit our website at www.mdlegagendaforwomen.org for more information.

Here are a few steps you can take to stay informed about legislation you care about and to let your legislators know your position.



SIGN UP FOR MLAW'S YAHOO LIST SERVE to receive information, updates, alerts, and other information of interest.



LEARN MORE about the issues you care about.



CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS during the session:

- ★ Call, write, e-mail, fax or visit legislators to express your support or opposition to legislation. You can find who your state legislators are, their contact information, copies of bills, hearing schedules and more at <http://mlis.state.md.us>.
- ★ Contact the lead group or groups to find out more about what you can do to support or oppose legislative proposals or other issues.
- ★ Attend a legislative hearing and be a visible supporter.
- ★ Submit written or give oral testimony.
- ★ Find out how your legislators voted – and hold them accountable – by letters or by your next opportunity to vote for them.



SPREAD THE WORD – promote the MLAW Agenda and other issues to friends and colleagues and encourage them to take action.



MAINTAIN FOCUS on key areas: health care, reproductive rights, economics, family law, domestic and sexual violence.



JOIN MLAW to support an independent voice for women's and family issues.



PARTICIPATE – and build women's collective power.

Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women

305 W. Chesapeake Avenue, Suite 201 • Towson, MD 21204

Phone/Fax: 443-519-1005 • mdlegagenda4women@yahoo.com • www.mdlegagendaforwomen.org

Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women

2015-2016 Membership Form

MLAW's membership year is July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016



I Want to Make a Difference!

I Want to be an MLAW Member

Type of Membership (check only one):

- ☐ **\$35 - Individual**
☐ **\$70 - Organization income under \$25,000**
☐ **\$100 - Organization income over \$25,000**

If you are joining as both an individual and an organization, please complete a separate form for EACH membership.

I Want to Increase MLAW's Collective Voice by Making an Additional Donation

☐ **\$1,000** ☐ **\$750** ☐ **\$500** ☐ **\$250** ☐ **\$100** ☐ **\$75** ☐ **\$50** ☐ **\$25** ☐ **Other** _____

Payment:

☐ **A check for \$ _____, made payable to MLAW, is enclosed.**

Individual or Organization: _____

Please spell out organization name. No acronyms.

Contact Name (for organizations only) _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ **Email:** _____

IMPORTANT! Please include an email address. Most of the business of MLAW will be conducted via email through the MLAW listserv.

Mail this completed form to:

MLAW

**305 W. Chesapeake Avenue, Suite 201
Towson, MD 21204**

The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Maryland Women (MLAW) is a 501(c)4 organization. Because we engage in legislative advocacy, contributions to MLAW are not tax-deductible.