

**THE BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON  
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SACRAMENTO  
COUNTY WOMEN'S COMMISSION**



# BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION

ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SACRAMENTO COUNTY WOMEN'S COMMISSION

December 8, 2020

Dear Supervisors,

Thank you for your leadership in establishing a Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) to explore the prospective merits of a Sacramento County Women's Commission. It has been a great honor to fulfill this mandate. After careful research and consideration, it is our recommendation that Sacramento County immediately move to establish a Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.

Women's commissions in California are a part of an historic national and international movement to increase equity and opportunity for women and girls. Many commissions were established during the civil rights era of the 1960s -1970s. Then, as now, the call for equity and justice was widespread and included the need to more fully understand and address the many issues and obstacles women face every day. Since that time, states, cities, and counties have created women's commissions that continue to be at the forefront of understanding and advancing gender equity.

Today, you as supervisors have the opportunity to forge a new women's commission model that is timely and relevant to 21st century women and girls, one that builds upon equity gains while responding to the barriers that women and girls still experience when faced with equity deficits and gender-related biases. This new model would also address the unequal treatment and disparities experienced by disenfranchised women.

This time of unprecedented upheaval due to the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, economic uncertainty, and civil unrest has profoundly affected women and revealed an even more urgent need to view complex issues through a gender lens. A women's commission can serve as a focal point for more fully understanding and addressing the impact of these crises on the lives of women and girls, while helping to explore the long-term implications and uplifting the community's recommendations for response.

The following report is the culmination of a year's study by the BRC. This work involved extensive research of women's commissions as well as active engagement with Sacramento County's women and girls through community meetings, forums, surveys, interviews, and listening circles seeking answers to a central question: "How are the Women and Girls of Sacramento County?" The findings support that Sacramento County will significantly benefit from a Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.

Through its work, the BRC has developed a model on which Sacramento County can build and continue to demonstrate its commitment to fully supporting women and girls. We sincerely hope that you will establish a Commission on the Status of Women and Girls with full community representation and participation that will serve the Board of Supervisors and the public for decades to come.

Sincerely,

*Erin Saberi*

On Behalf of The Blue Ribbon Commission on the Establishment of a Sacramento Women's Commission



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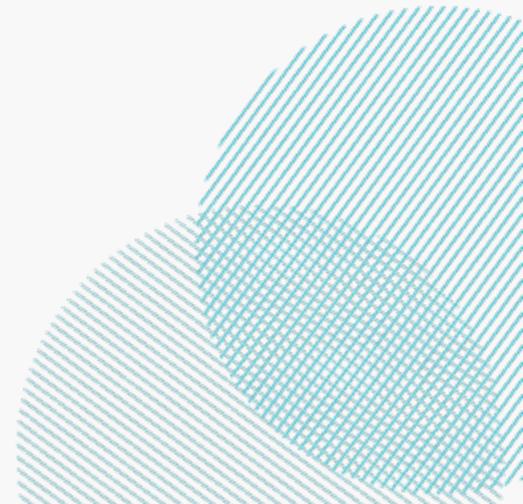
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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

SPECIAL THANKS

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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*Cover art by BRC Listening Circle participants and Women's Wisdom Art.*





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Blue Ribbon Commission on the Establishment of a Sacramento County Women's Commission (BRC) was established by a unanimous vote of the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors in July 2019. The BRC was formed in the fall of 2019 and held its first meeting on December 2, 2019, to begin carrying out its [mandate](#) to research the merits of a Sacramento County Women's Commission, "by which the Board of Supervisors and public could better understand issues, opportunities and challenges unique to women in Sacramento County."

Women's experiences and issues are diverse, distinctive and often affected by ongoing structural inequities. Therefore, it is important that government policy, programs, and key decisions be considered through a gender lens that incorporates women's experience along with reliable and consistent county-level data.

Of the eight largest counties in California, Sacramento County is one of two without a commission on the status of women. For the close to 800,000 women and girls in Sacramento County who make up 51% of today's population, a women's commission would serve as an invaluable resource to county government and the public concerning issues that affect women and girls in unique ways, while ensuring improved understanding and consideration of their specific needs in policy and budgetary decisions.

After extensive research and study conducted between December 2019 and November 2020, the BRC presents this report with a recommendation for the immediate establishment of a Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.

## THE WORK OF THE BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION

The BRC researched women's commissions in California including the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls and 26 commissions in city and county jurisdictions, all dedicated to improving the status of women and girls.

The BRC found that women's commissions add tremendous value to their cities and counties. Local women's commissions advise city and county policymakers on issues from domestic violence resource allocation to training police and county sheriffs. The diverse issues commissions address range from analysis and recommendations for improvements at a county jail to informing public works projects with specific—and previously unrecognized impact—on women and girls. Commissions have provided gender analysis of agencies and resources in their jurisdiction to inform government policies and programs. Each commission spoke to the BRC of the importance of serving as a clearinghouse for information and collaboration on behalf of women and girls.

The most successful women's commissions engage deeply with the women and girls in their communities and the organizations that serve them; they leverage city and county resources in order to respond effectively to the areas of most concern in their communities of women and girls. Further, some of the most dynamic commissions are connected to a county Office of Women's Policy.



## HOW ARE THE WOMEN AND GIRLS?

The work of the BRC drew upon the extensive community engagement and research of the volunteer grass-roots effort which preceded it, known as *Sacramento For Women and Girls*. The BRC continued to ask the question posed by *Sacramento For Women and Girls* in its community outreach between January 2018 and June 2019: **How are the Women and Girls of Sacramento County?**

Answering this question is a complex pursuit that requires a sustained effort over time with dedicated resources and tools, such as consistent and reliable data. The BRC sought to begin this pursuit by reviewing currently available data and inviting a broad spectrum of women and girls to answer this question for themselves through a series of community meetings, forums, surveys, listening circles, and one-on-one conversations with community leaders.

The BRC *Ad Hoc* Advisory Committee on Data and Information analysed the responses that identify the major issues important to participants. When the results from the online surveys were tabulated and overarching themes from the listening circles were identified and aggregated three top issues surfaced:

- Safety and protection from violence
- Physical and mental healthcare
- Economic well-being, including access to affordable childcare and housing.

To address these issues, women leaders identified some key areas for improvement:

- Women's needs are unique and require visibility through a gender lens; and distinct communities of women have particular concerns which must be understood and addressed

- More support is needed for the integration of existing resources and the scaling of successful programs to reach more women
- Access to reliable, county-level data is a necessary component of identifying and meeting the needs of women and girls; data is also important for funding and program development
- The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women, with effects playing out differently for those of different races and classes while challenging service providers' ability to meet pressing needs.

## THE TIME IS NOW

One hundred years since women won the right to vote, and more than five decades after women's commissions were first formed to advance the status of women and girls, we are in another milestone moment. There is a groundswell of support for women's voices to be heard and long-standing issues to be addressed. From the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements to annual women's marches drawing women from all walks of life in cities and towns throughout the country, women are galvanized to take the next step toward securing full equity and representation in American life.

In recent months, the United States elected its first woman Vice-President and has seen bipartisan growth in the number of women elected to Congress and state office. In California, women now hold half of elected statewide offices, including the first female Lieutenant Governor, the first woman has been appointed to lead the CA Highway Patrol, and all five seats on the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors will be held by women in 2021. In the Sacramento region, the Metro Chamber of Commerce is being led by a woman for the first time and women gained leadership positions in the 2020 election as mayors and on city councils.





The time is now to support the establishment of a government entity dedicated to supporting women and girls.

The Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) in its interim capacity, has demonstrated some of the benefits of having a commission for women and girls. Women have joined together across the spectrum of women's issues, programs and organizations in Sacramento County to share information, identify pressing issues, collaborate, and support each other in new ways, including for pandemic crisis response. Women and girls have enthusiastically responded to the opportunity to be heard and supported and have expressed the desire to be a part of the work of a permanent commission.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on this momentum, and recognizing that taking the next step toward acquiring full equity for women and girls requires policymaker involvement and institutional support, the Blue Ribbon Commission recommends that the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors move to establish a Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls to advise and report regularly to the Board of Supervisors and the public on the status of women and girls.

The role, responsibilities and purpose of this commission would include:

- Advising the County Board of Supervisors and the public on issues of gender equity and women's and girls' well-being
- Acting as a liaison between the Board of Supervisors and the women and girls in Sacramento County
- Serving as a resource for study, data, and recommendations on matters concerning discrimination and inequity pertaining to women and girls on the basis of gender

- Holding public hearings, publishing reports, collecting data, convening stakeholders, and recommending programs, policies, and legislation to promote and ensure equal rights and opportunities for all women and girls in Sacramento County
- Maintaining a clearinghouse and hub of information of data, local programs, and services
- Reflecting the unique diversity of Sacramento County and addressing the barriers to equity that exist within specific communities of women.

Through its work, the BRC has built a strong foundation of engagement, collaboration and research upon which a high-functioning and dynamic commission can be built. It is our hope that the county will continue to demonstrate its commitment to fully supporting women and girls with the establishment of a permanent commission that can serve the Board of Supervisors and the public for years to come.

How are the women and girls? Today we stand more hopeful, glimpsing the possibility that we can come together with purpose, focus, and intention to advance equity and opportunity through a Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.



*BRC Commissioners Vicki Boyd and Carol Enns at the Impact Foundry's "What If" Conference, February 4, 2020*





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# I. INTRODUCTION

IT BEGAN WITH A QUESTION

## IT BEGAN WITH A QUESTION, HOW ARE THE WOMEN AND GIRLS?

In late 2017, inspired by a national conversation about women, a small group of Sacramento County women began gathering in each other's homes compelled by common concerns about women's well-being. After decades of social and political gains, women and girls were sharing with each other and the world that they were still unsafe and that in numerous facets of American life gender equity remained elusive. Women were still making much less on the dollar than men, women's employment in all education groups stalled or went down after the year 2000, and sex segregation was still persistent in fields of study and occupations.<sup>1</sup>

In Sacramento County, while women and girls were being served by an array of providers in a variety of areas, the problems faced by women were becoming more complex and interwoven. Less affordable housing and a scarcity of housing choices intersected with issues around women's safety. Women living on fixed incomes were at risk of homelessness due to rising rents. Women's economic stability was affected by issues of access to childcare and affordable healthcare.

An initial public data search revealed that readily accessible data were sparse, sometimes unavailable at the county or individual level to analyze by gender and other demographic information. A landscape review further demonstrated that no single entity existed to ensure public awareness and accountability

for the well-being of Sacramento County's women and girls. Understanding that women's commissions serve this function throughout the world, around the country, and in 27 cities and counties in California, the group began to explore the possibility of establishing a commission for women and girls in Sacramento County.

As the conversation grew, so, too, did the circle of volunteers from the initial handful to a core group of about 30 women and girls. This all-volunteer group, now known as *Sacramento For Women and Girls*, in partnership with local organizations, held a series of public meetings, conducted surveys, and launched listening circles engaging hundreds of people. They were asked their opinion about issues affecting women and girls and the prospect of establishing a commission for women and girls in Sacramento County. Support and excitement increased, and after nearly a year and a half of community engagement, ideas and issues emerged, along with a growing consensus that women and girls wanted a distinct government entity to advance and support their equity and well-being. [See Appendix I for a list of Sacramento for Women and Girls members.](#)

<sup>1</sup> "Progress toward gender equality in the United States has slowed or stalled," Paula England, Andrew Levine, Emma Mishel, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Mar 2020.



...on every indicator considered, women's progress relative to men has slowed, and in some cases progress has stalled entirely. In every case except educational attainment, where women are now ahead of men, a slowdown or stall has occurred at a time when there was still substantial gender inequality favoring men.

Progress toward gender equality in the United States has slowed or stalled." Paula England, Andrew Levine, Emma Mishel Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences March 2020



Shortly thereafter, in July 2019, Sacramento County Supervisor Phil Serna brought a resolution before the County Board of Supervisors to further advance the exploration of a women’s commission in Sacramento County. The [Resolution](#)—which passed by a unanimous vote of the Board on July 23, 2019—established a Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) to research and better understand the prospective merit of a women’s commission as an advisory body to the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors. After consultation with women’s organizations, members of the community, and each member of the Board of Supervisors, the Blue Ribbon Commission on the Establishment of a Sacramento County Women’s Commission was fully formed by November 2019, with support and funding from Supervisor Phil Serna. [See Appendix II for Blue Ribbon Commission members.](#)



*BRC Commissioner Emily Bender, BRC meeting, December 18, 2019*



A women's commission... demonstrates a commitment to public accountability and good government. The commission's work brings transparency to who is being served and how, with the goal of gender equity. Finally, a women's commission brings together groups and individuals from across disciplines and socio-economic backgrounds to strengthen the fabric of the community.

*—Dr. Emily Murase, former Director of the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women, speaking at the Blue Ribbon Commission Meeting December 2, 2019*



*My Sister’s House, OCA and IAS Listening Circle, March 7, 2019*





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## **II. THE WORK OF THE BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION**

# THE WORK OF THE BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION



It was very awakening. I wasn't aware of some of the things I heard from cultural sensitivity to how we might work with law enforcement on behalf of women and girls.

-How are the Women and Girls?  
Virtual Forum participant

The Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) met monthly between December 2019, and November 2020, and created five *ad hoc* advisory committees, all open to the public. The monthly meetings included guest speakers from local organizations and women's commissions in other jurisdictions. The *ad hoc* advisory committees conducted extensive research on women's commissions in California, continued community outreach, surveyed individuals and organizations serving women and girls, featured a youth committee to focus on the unique concerns and aspirations of young women, and researched available statistics on women and girls in Sacramento County, including data from other organizations. [For a complete list of ad hoc advisory and guest speakers, see Appendix III.](#)

The BRC was three and a half months into its work when the COVID-19 pandemic closures began in mid-March 2020. As with all other aspects of contemporary life, the work of this commission was significantly affected. Members of the BRC encountered unexpected time constraints due to new or additional childcare,

parental care, economic, and health concerns. In addition, those who led organizations supporting women and girls or women-owned businesses were called away to attend to work in emergency environments while procuring a safe and secure environment for their staff.

After cancelling its March 2020, meeting and devoting the April 2020, meeting to community response about the pandemic, the BRC resumed listening and learning from women and girls throughout Sacramento County via a virtual environment. The initial work plan was modified replacing in-person listening circles with an online community survey, virtual listening session conversations with community leaders and activists, and incorporating a listening circle into a pre-existing youth virtual event.

Close to 500 participants from community groups and organizations, representing a broad spectrum of women and girls throughout the county, contributed their ideas and spoke about their concerns. Still more participants completed an online community survey to identify the priorities of a would-be women and girls commission. The BRC also interviewed organization and community leaders about their perspectives on the status of women and girls in Sacramento County. [For a list of interview participants see Appendix IV.](#)

This listening and engagement culminated with inviting more voices to the table, in a well-attended countywide [“How Are The Women and Girls? Virtual Forum”](#) on October 10, 2020, an event co-hosted by women and girls' organizations throughout the county. Congresswoman Doris Matsui provided a video keynote address that was followed by panels and break out listening sessions addressing the impact on women of the COVID-19 pandemic. [For a list of Listening Circles & Virtual Forum Co-Hosts see Appendix V.](#)





... a lack of support and guidance for women and girls can drastically affect life outcomes... the listening sessions have provided invaluable insight on how we can assure that women thrive in our region. Taking the voices and values of these women forward... we can share it to bring real action.

-Congresswoman Doris Matsui, at the "How Are The Women and Girls?" Virtual Forum

Members of the BRC were invited to speak to local women's organizations, including the American Association of University Women, the Board of Director's of My Sister's House, Soroptomists of Sacramento and Elk Grove, and to the Elk Grove City Council. Commissioners also participated in the Impact Foundry's 2020 [What IF Conference](#), attended meetings of the Association of CA Women's Commissions, and were invited to speak on a panel at the [United Nations NGO-CSW](#) (postponed due to the COVID-19 restrictions).

## BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION COVID-19 RESPONSE

Through the BRC's extensive listening and local community connections, we were able to see the role that a women's commission could play during a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Although its mandate was interim and limited, the members of the BRC felt it was important to provide some community support and act as a mechanism for organizations to effectively collaborate.

- **The BRC Community Mask Making Project.** The BRC responded to domestic violence shelters' high demand for face masks. Individual commissioners, together with our partner organizations the *American*

*Association of University Women* and *Women's Wisdom Art* sewed and delivered approximately 1,200 masks to domestic violence organizations. Shortly thereafter, the BRC responded to a request for children's masks with *Women's Wisdom Art* and provided 150 additional masks for children living in domestic violence shelters.



- **Food Bank Volunteering.** The BRC reached out to local food banks and connected volunteers to fill in for community volunteers who were unable to help due to being in COVID-19 high risk groups. Representatives from *La Familia Counseling Center* provided information at a BRC meeting about their food distribution stations and shared a request for help through member networks and on social media.

"The Blue Ribbon Commission has already made an impact on My Sister's House. It has been an important vehicle to let our community members and leaders know about how COVID-19 has concealed abusive home situations. Members have contributed masks and supplies, provided donations, and communicated with policymakers about the needs of domestic violence organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic."  
-Nilda Valmores, Executive Director, My Sister's House





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## III. HOW ARE THE WOMEN AND GIRLS?



# HOW ARE THE WOMEN AND GIRLS?

The voices of women have always guided the steps of the long march toward increased equity for women in the United States. This march gained momentum in the late 1800s, led to the ratification of the 19th amendment 100 years ago, and continued with the civil rights era - giving birth to women's commissions over 55 years ago.

Because it has been important to the BRC to truly listen to and represent the concerns of women and girls in Sacramento County, the BRC continued to ask the question posed by *Sacramento For Women and Girls* in their community outreach: **How are the Women and Girls of Sacramento County?**

Answering this question is a complex pursuit that requires a sustained effort over time with dedicated resources, engagement, and tools such as consistent and reliable data. *Sacramento For Women and Girls* and the BRC sought to begin this pursuit by asking a broad spectrum of women and girls to answer this question for themselves through a series of community meetings, forums, surveys, listening circles, and one-on-one conversations with community leaders.

Much of our listening was conducted in partnership with women and girl's organizations, including the incorporation of a hands on art component facilitated through a partnership with *Women's Wisdom Art*. In this way, women and girls who might not speak their concerns verbally could draw their thoughts on fabric art squares which were later woven into quilt hangings.



Quilts made by Listening Circle participants and Women's Wisdom Art

## HEARING FROM WOMEN AND GIRLS

Sacramento County women and girls expressed a need to be seen, heard, and represented. No other quote more directly stated this than when a young woman from Foothill Farms High School said during a listening circle, "Please come back because most people never ask us what we think and how we're doing."



Prioritize affordable housing, childcare and a living wage so I can support my twin daughters. They are only 4 months old. I want them to have a future.

*Community Survey Respondent*



We need representation for women of color in essential leadership roles.

*Community Survey Respondent*



Representation is needed from all communities, especially communities often left out of the conversation. They are often those who need the most help.

*Community Survey Respondent*



Women and girls are diverse and so are their needs. As we listened and collected women and girls' words, thoughts, and wishes we found that over and over, and in different ways, women asked for a seat at the table; to have service providers who understand their culture and their needs; and to have a voice in the design and distribution of resources. Importantly, we found that robust numerical data about women and girls at the county level was difficult to come by, often sparse or unavailable.

The Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Data and Information analyzed the survey, listening circle, and one-to-one data, to identify the major issues important to participants. When the results from the online surveys were tabulated and overarching themes from the listening circles identified and aggregated, three top issues surfaced:

- Safety and protection from violence
- Physical and mental healthcare
- Economic and financial well-being, including affordable and accessible childcare and housing.

In addition, significant challenges were identified:

- Data is an important part of meeting the needs of women and girls; there is a critical lack of available data about the status of women and girls in Sacramento County
- Women's needs are unique and require visibility through a gender lens and services for marginalized groups of women
- Women's organizations need support to continue to meet the needs of women and girls; small service organizations lack sufficient staff and resources for program and organizational development.

## SAFETY AND PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE

"A family free of violence is a community free of violence"

-Faith Whitmore, CEO, Sacramento Regional Family Justice Center

**Sacramento County has a higher rate of hospitalization for domestic violence incidents than other counties in California.**

-Kaiser Permanente Community Health Assessment (2019)

"When women connect with other women, it builds women's confidence. Overcoming domestic violence is often about confidence, how to be confident and empowering women to be confident and to advocate for ourselves."

-Listening Circle participant

Protection from violence, both in and out of the home, is a top concern for the women and girls of Sacramento County. Women victims of domestic violence and sexual harassment spoke of needing more training for law enforcement and health professionals who work with them and young women spoke of persistent sexual harassment and underreported dating violence. Concern about domestic violence has grown during the COVID-19 crisis for both women and children, as families have become more isolated from resources and from those who would report abuse.

Issues and suggestions that surfaced include:

- Sexual harassment persists and women and girls want it to stop
- Increase domestic violence awareness and



intervention and provide more shelters and safe community spaces, especially in immigrant and marginalized communities.

- Women, particularly those who have experienced domestic violence, suggested that police receive training on how to address trauma.
- Girls and teens are impacted by family domestic violence and dating violence
- Young women aging out of foster care need increased access to community resources and advocates to support them as they are often victims of crime.

In California, 27% of families eligible for SNAP benefits do not receive them, compared to only 2% of families in Tennessee.

- Prenatal-to-3 State Policy Center  
Univ. of TX at Austin

Sacramento County has higher rates of breast cancer deaths: 21 per 100,000 compared to statewide California rate of 18.6 and a US rate of 20 per 100,000.

- Sacramento County Department of  
Public Health

## PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTHCARE

Women and girls in Sacramento County want access to better health and healthcare resources such as:

- Increased and improved access to local health clinics
- Assistance navigating healthcare systems, including access to culturally-appropriate services for women in immigrant communities
- More mental health supports for youth and adults, such as online access to mental health resources

- More access to reproductive and midwifery services, especially in communities where disparities exist. For example, black women across all economic and education levels have a higher rate of perinatal mortality.
- Health and sex education, including education around body image and access to feminine hygiene products for students and homeless women.



We need more focus on college student's mental health and basic needs like lack of food and housing, especially during COVID-19.

-DEE DEE GILLIAM, DIRECTOR OF HEALTH & WELLNESS,  
LOS RIOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

Women more frequently engage with the healthcare system than do men; they often take their children to the doctor, choose their family's healthcare providers, and are more likely to be the ones to carry out the doctor's recommendations.

-KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION  
WOMEN IN THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM (2017)

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL WELL-BEING

In 2019, approximately 73,000 businesses in Sacramento were women-owned. We don't know how many of those have closed since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Those businesses employ 54,815 people and 11.7 billion dollars annual revenue.

-Ventureneer

27.3% of Sacramento County seniors are below the elderly income threshold index compared to 26% of California as a whole.

-UCLA California Health Interview Survey

Between approximately 21% and 26% of Latinx/Hispanic and African American children live in poverty; they are more likely than other groups to live in poverty.

-kidsdata.org





**I have a job - I work 7 days a week and I can't afford housing for myself and my 4 children. We sleep in our car.**

—Community Survey Respondent

**The wealth gap is even bigger than the wage gap, particularly among women of color.**

—Jessica Stender, Equal Rights Advocates, speaking at a *Sacramento for Women and Girls* community meeting December 2018.

Economic and financial well-being emerged as a top priority for the women and girls in Sacramento County. Women frequently stated that their economic stability could improve with:

- Career training and workforce development
- Mentorship opportunities
- Educational and financial aid resource support
- Affordable and accessible child care
- Affordable housing—especially for older women, students, LGBTQ youth, and homeless women
- Job-related transportation.

## WOMEN'S NEEDS ARE UNIQUE AND REQUIRE UNDERSTANDING THROUGH A GENDER LENS



**The onset of COVID-19 has highlighted the need for a gender lens on social services because women have borne the brunt of the economic downturn.**

—Suzanne Doty, former President of the Association of California Women's Commissions and former Chair and Commissioner Santa Clara County Commission on the Status of Women

*“Approximately 50% of the homeless in Sacramento are black women and their children.” (see Homelessness In Sacramento, Results from the 2019 Point-In-Time Count, Sacramento State University Report.)*

*—RoLanda Wilkins, Director, Earth Mama Healing, at the How are the Women and Girls? Virtual Forum, October 2020*

A gender lens is often missing when analyzing governmental and community services. Including women and girls' voices can lead to better design and delivery of services that take into account women and girls' unique needs and the intersection of complex issues. As one community survey respondent wrote, “Over 80% of the young women we serve in our housing for youth overcoming homelessness have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual abuse. We need far richer services for women overcoming these traumas.”

Community meeting participants raised issues such as the unique needs of women and girls in the criminal justice system and how important it is to apply a gender analysis to understand and improve their circumstances. Likewise, girls spoke about their unique needs in education, such as needing more support and mentorship in science, technology, engineering and math. Women also addressed the unique needs of women in business and pressures such as childcare, equal pay and transportation.

*“Don't forget about the women and girls in the juvenile justice system.”*

*—Listening Circle participant*

## WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS NEED SUPPORT

While women's organizations are vital to serving the needs of women and girls in Sacramento County, we heard from leaders and from program participants about numerous challenges they face in executing or further developing their programs. Many spoke of growing need and



limited capacity to meet demand. Others spoke of the potential benefits of replicating or scaling successful programs to reach more recipients, but limited resources available to do so. Some organizations are small, and lack the staffing and funding needed to develop their program. Often they are torn between the demands of providing services and the demands of applying for grants and resources.

*"We also need widely expanded wellness services for survivors of trafficking, sexual assault, and domestic violence so we can heal and break the cycle."*

*-Community Survey Respondent*

## DATA IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF MEETING THE NEEDS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

*"What are we doing to meet the needs of women and girls in the criminal justice system with probations, with courts, with CBO's, with families? We need more information so that can lead to better decision-making."*

*-Sacramento for Women and Girls meeting participant, January 2018*

[D]isaggregated data around age, ethnicity, race, gender are not available to examine disparities of health within the community.

*- Kaiser Permanente Community Health Assessment (2019)*

Robust data provides accurate information about how women and girls are doing. Data is necessary to support program development, identify funding sources, and design services for organizations serving women and girls. The BRC found it difficult, in preparing this report, to find data to adequately answer our question: How are the women and girls? Data is either sparse, sporadically available, or inaccessible at

the county or individual level and is not ready for analysis. A variety of government agencies and organizations in Sacramento County operate from data silos without the benefit of sharing potentially useful data about women and girls. This results in a decreased capacity to fully understand and address the needs of women and girls in our county. Women leaders and program practitioners from organizations that serve women and girls repeatedly emphasized the need for reliable data and the need to share their data with each other. For example: domestic violence calls and human trafficking numbers are dispersed throughout systems and agencies and are not easily accessible. According to the Department of Justice, there were more than 5,000 domestic violence calls to Sacramento County law enforcement agencies in 2019. This number does not count the calls to local domestic violence organizations which may reflect households that never call law enforcement.

## AVAILABLE DATA ABOUT WOMEN AND GIRLS

Publicly available data, although limited, supports much of what we heard from Sacramento County's women and girls. Despite decades of gains, troubling issues remain. In Sacramento County pre-COVID-19:

### Poverty is prevalent

- Nearly one-third of female-headed family households live in poverty, which is \$24,000 or less for a household of four. -American Community Survey (2019)
- Approximately 17% of women over the age of 18 in Sacramento County live in poverty. -Women's Well-Being Index 2020, CA Budget & Policy Center

### Childcare is unaffordable

- The annual cost of childcare for young children and infants in Sacramento County is approximately 57% of the single mother's median income. -Women's Well-Being Index 2020, CA Budget & Policy Center



## Violence against women persists

- According to kidsdata.org in 2018 there were over 4,600 domestic-violence-related calls for assistance in Sacramento County. -Women's Foundation 2020

## Wage Gap

- Women generally earn approximately 87 cents for every dollar earned by men. African-American women in California earn 58 cents and Latina women earn 42 cents for every dollar earned by men. -Women's Well-Being Index 2020, CA Budget & Policy Center

During the course of our work, the *California Budget and Policy Center* issued a Women's Well-Being Index (October 2020) that provided some local data from the years 2014-2018.<sup>2</sup> The numbers indicated on this index also coincide with what the BRC heard from Sacramento's women and girls. While the women of Sacramento County do well in employment and earnings (pre-COVID 19), Sacramento ranks low in other areas and is in the bottom half of California counties, ranking 30 out of 58. For example:

## Health (Rank 27)

- Delayed Medical Care, rank 47
- Life Expectancy at birth for females, rank 33

## Safety (Rank 36)

- Neighborhood Safety, rank 53
- Hospital Visits Due to Assault, rank 49

## Economic Security (rank 32)

- Poverty, rank 34
- Cost of Child Care, rank 32
- Commuting Time, rank 52

## Political Empowerment (Rank 39)

- Voter Turnout, rank 37
- School Board Membership, rank 40

This new data source is welcome news to the BRC which has been searching for data since the beginning of our inquiry. Currently, there is

also a state funded research project to determine the number of human trafficking victims in Sacramento. A clearinghouse for data on the status of Sacramento County's women and girls, which would integrate these and other data sources, would be a valuable resource and tool for county policymakers.

## THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC EXACERBATES THE NEEDS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS



UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has said that the global pandemic has reversed decades of limited and fragile progress on gender equality and women's rights... the pandemic is exposing and exacerbating the considerable hurdles women face in achieving their rights and fulfilling their potential...Without a concerted response, we risk losing a generation of more gains.

-UN Women

In our "How Are The Women and Girls?" virtual forum, held in October 2020, the BRC asked women and girls about the impact of COVID-19. Many responded that the pandemic is placing inordinate pressure on their lives in multiple areas. Women are on the frontlines of this crisis as healthcare workers, teachers, essential staff, and family caregivers. They are often the primary caregivers for home-bound children and elderly or ill family members even as they are working, looking for work, or out of work.

Women businesses which thrived in the Sacramento region pre-COVID-19, have been hard hit by the pandemic. Latina and immigrant business owners expressed concerns about being more vulnerable to the economic downturn.

<sup>2</sup> <https://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/womens-well-being-index>



Locally, women's organizations are reporting a surge in domestic violence calls and a concern about a lack of reporting of child abuse.



**Thirty percent of Hispanic women lost their jobs due to COVID, compared to about nine percent of white women.**

—Rachel Rios, Executive Director, La Familia Counseling Center, at the How Are the Women and Girls? Virtual Forum

**Asian women are more afraid to get out of the house and ask for help due to the increased racism Asian people are facing around COVID-19.**

—Nilda Valmores, Executive Director My Sister's House

**We are experiencing a double pandemic right now COVID-19 and racism.**

—Anita Ross, Founder, Women for Equality Sacramento, at the How are the Women and Girls? Virtual Forum

At the time of writing this report, national data about the impact of the pandemic on women is beginning to emerge. According to a recent study by the National Bureau of Economic Research COVID-19 is challenging hard-fought gains for women in the workforce:<sup>3</sup>

- Working women are experiencing the worst effects of the COVID-19 recession, unlike in previous downturns, which have hit working women the hardest.
- The crisis has hit industry sectors in which women's employment is more concentrated – restaurants and other retail establishments, hospitality and health care.
- Many women have had to leave the workforce in order to support children who are attending school from home or because of a lack of childcare and closed daycare centers.

A pandemic amplifies and heightens existing inequities, especially for women from communities burdened with longstanding systemic inequities.

**"About 865,000 women left the [U.S.] workforce between August and September 2020, compared with 216,000 men of that same period. Of the 865,000 women, 324,00 were Latina, while 58,000 were black women".**

Source - "COVID-19's Impact on Working Women Is an Unprecedented Disaster," Livia Gershon, Smithsonian Magazine, October 19, 2020

A women's commission can serve as a focal point for more fully understanding and addressing the impact of this crisis on the lives of women and girls, helping to explore the long-term implications, and uplifting the community's recommendations for response.

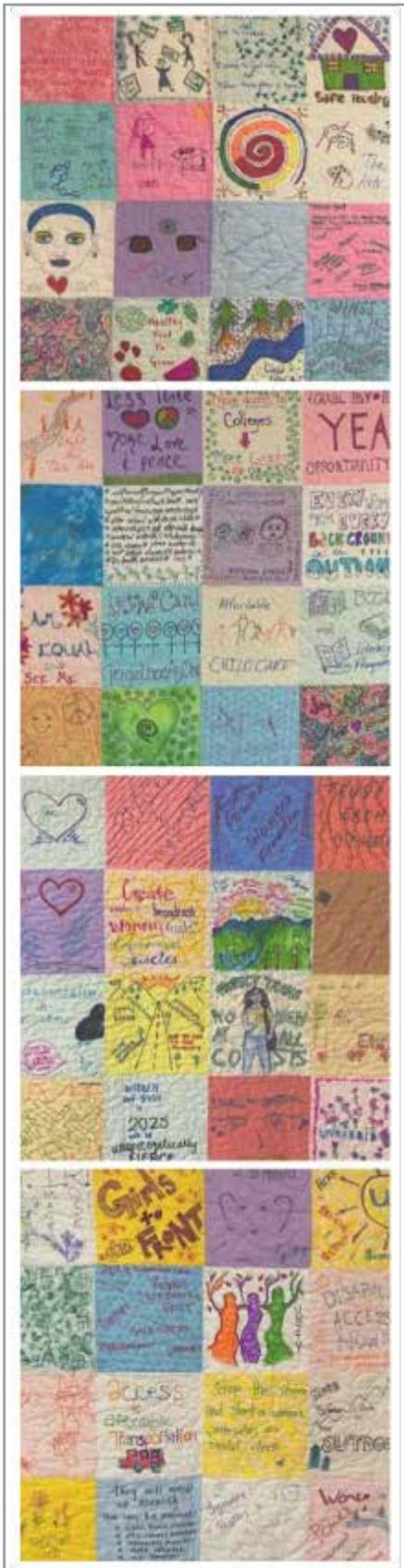
Issues that disproportionately affect women such as domestic violence also need to be factored into COVID-19 crisis mitigation and recovery policies. For example, monies earmarked for homeless safety and relief also need to include domestic violence victims and how support for them can be earmarked and provided.

**"Budgets are a reflection of our values, and our county budget must reflect the values that we hold as women in this community and that we want to see as we navigate this pandemic and recovery. It is essential that we have a Commission that benchmarks where we are..., that measures where we are going, and that brings constant awareness, education, and pressure on these institutions to put our money where our mouth is."**

—Amanda Blackwood, President and CEO of Sacramento Chamber of Commerce, at the How Are the Women and Girls? Virtual Forum

<sup>3</sup> "The Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality," National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 26947, April 2020.





Quilts made by Listening Circle participants and Women's Wisdom Art,



My Sister's House, OCA and IAS Listening Circle, March 7, 2019



Sacramento For Women and Girls Meeting. L to R: Marty McKnew, Vicki Boyd, Susan Stone, Alexis Blount, Sahana Rajiyah



Sacramento State College of Arts & Letters Listening Circle, March 23, 2019







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## **IV. FINDINGS ON WOMEN'S COMMISSIONS**

# FINDINGS ON WOMEN'S COMMISSIONS



**A Women's Commission is democracy in action: bringing people from the community to the table to advise and inform the government about the needs and concerns of women and girls.**

—Carla Collins, Santa Clara Office of Women's Policy

**A commission could make sure we are well while we are doing the work. We have always been strong but we haven't always been well.**

—RoLanda Wilkins, Executive Director Earth Mama Healing, at the How Are the Women and Girls? Virtual Forum

The Blue Ribbon Commission's (BRC) Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Women's Commission Models researched women's commissions throughout California—including the state commission, 20 county, and 6 city commissions to identify the roles and responsibilities, structures, and value of women's commissions as well as the factors that are key to their successes.

*For a list of the commissions researched see Appendix VI.*

A women's commission is a governmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equity and the empowerment of women. Women's commissions in California are valued for their role in helping their communities gain an understanding of the specific issues affecting women and girls. Each commission carries out its own unique mandate to advise its Board of Supervisors or City Council, and the public on matters relating to gender equity in their jurisdiction.

Most of the county commissions the BRC researched were established in the 1970s and 1980s, during a time of heightened public

interest in gender equity and social justice. Since that time, some commissions have been quite successful, growing their influence and mandate, while others' successes have waned. In recent years, there has been renewed interest in the work of women's commissions with the revitalization of the California State Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, a new Solano County commission, and efforts underway to form women's commissions in Orange County and here in Sacramento County. *For a brief history of women's commissions in the US and background on California commissions, refer to Appendix VII.*

California women's commissions have led efforts and progress on issues affecting women and girls such as poverty, economic well-being, homelessness, domestic violence, veteran status, incarceration, childcare, education, access to STEM education, and pay equity. Women's commissions also are advocating and raising awareness about policy priorities and the availability of accessible data to inform policy decisions.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF WOMEN'S COMMISSIONS

**"For over fifty years, these [women's] commissions have been tasked with gaining an understanding of issues affecting women and girls, reporting this information effectively to government officials and legislators, and developing a legislative and advocacy agenda informed by the lived experiences of all women and girls within their region."**

—National Association of Commissions for Women



Women's commissions serve as the voice of women from the community. Commissioners listen and learn from local women and girls to ensure their experiences are an integral part of policy decisions. They also serve an investigative role and examine issues of gender discrimination. We found that the roles and responsibilities of women's commissions include advocating and advising policymakers on issues affecting women and girls; educating the public about available resources; and researching and analyzing policies, issues, and services through a gender equity lens.

Some valuable projects that we found were completed by women's commissions include: analyzing the gender composition of boards, commissions, government agencies, and elected political bodies; conducting training in areas such as gender equity, equal pay, workforce development, domestic violence, and safety; and conducting hearings and gathering data on topics of concern to the community and/or their Board or City Council.

## STRUCTURE OF WOMEN'S COMMISSIONS

Nearly all of the county and city commissions the BRC researched are established by ordinance, have by-laws, and are similar in structure. Total membership ranges from 5–17 commissioners, each of whom serve a term of between 2–4 years. Most or all of the commissioners are appointed by county supervisors and/or city councils and mayors. Some counties give supervisors individual appointment authority, and one [county](#) has appointments by the Board of Supervisors as a whole. [Alameda County](#) has a unique model in which the mayors in the county receive one joint appointment. [Two counties](#) have [two designated seats](#) for youth members. One county has a separate youth [commission](#).

Most commissions report directly to the Board

of Supervisors or their City Council, however, in some counties there is an intermediate control agency, such as the Social Services Department in Alameda County, the Chief Administrative Office in San Diego County, and the Human Resources Department in Sonoma County. In Santa Clara County there is an Office of Womens Policy and in San Francisco City and County there is a permanent city Department on the Status of Women. These departments provide staffing and support for the work of their Women's Commissions.



A commission offers more than a gender lens on public services, it is also a coalescing organization.

—Dr. Emily Murase, former Director of the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women, speaking at a Sacramento for Women and Girls Community Meeting, January 2018

Many commissions have designated staff support from within their jurisdiction in either the county executive's office or in a county or city agency and direct funding from their jurisdiction for expenses. Some jurisdictions are responsible for programs and receive funds from their jurisdictions and from grants to implement programming.

## VALUE OF WOMEN'S COMMISSIONS

Many commissioners with whom we consulted spoke of the value of the convening power of women's commissions, particularly in response to pressing issues that arise in the community. [For example](#), the *California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls* convened a [Pay Equity Task Force](#) to transform a new California law into action. Other commissioners addressed the ability of commissions to identify and mitigate



problems that were previously unrecognized. *The Office of Women's Policy in Santa Clara County* together with the Commission on the Status of Women [thoroughly assessed](#) the [status of women incarcerated in the county](#). Through this work, the commission in Santa Clara County was able to connect with incarcerated women and found that these women were concerned about the shackling of pregnant inmates; a state law prohibiting the practice was eventually passed. Another example of the value of commissions is of the San Francisco Commission analyzing its public works with a gender lens. [The result](#) was for the city and county to add more street lighting to increase safety for women and girls.

Some commissions pointed to women and girls in their communities being unaware of public services and resources available to them. In response, the commissions added value by developing resource guides for women and girls. For example, the City of Pasadena Commission on the Status of Women produces an annual [Survival Guide](#) to provide information about healthcare, childcare, employment opportunities, government programs, housing, substance abuse programs, and transportation options. This commission partners with the Pasadena Police Department to distribute the survival guide to women and girls.

## KEY ATTRIBUTES OF SUCCESSFUL WOMEN'S COMMISSIONS

The most successful women's commissions engage deeply with the women and girls in their communities and the organizations that serve them; they leverage city and county resources in order to respond effectively to the areas of most concern in their communities of women and girls. Additional factors for successful county women's commissions include:

- Membership: representative of the

community and few to no vacant commission seats

- Funding and Staffing: at least one dedicated support staff and funding for research and community activities
- Communication: regular communication with their Board of Supervisors or City Council. Connections and interaction across county/city systems and programs
- Accountability: annual work plans that are regularly adapted based on emerging community needs focused on three-four priority areas annually
- Programs: coordinated and/or direct management of community programs, such as domestic violence services, provide ongoing, sustained funding mechanisms.



It's about being a part of the government that is trusted and out in the community. That is, it's not just about having documents in different languages, it's about cultural connection.

—Suzanne Doty, former President of the Association of California Women's Commissions and former Chair and Commissioner Santa Clara County Commission on the Status of Women.



It's more than just a city and county commission, it's a focal point for so many women in our community and it links us to best practices throughout the state and across the country.

—Charlotte "Char" Bland, former V.P., Association of CA Commissions for Women and former Executive Director, City of Pasadena Commission on the Status of Women



The *Ad Hoc* Advisory Committee on Commission Models also found that some of the most dynamic commissions are connected to a county Office of Women’s Policy, such as [Alameda County](#), [Santa Clara County](#), and the [San Francisco Commission and Department on the Status of Women](#). Staff in these county departments are responsible for supporting the commission’s operations and implementing its policy and program recommendations.

By contrast, the least successful commissions reported struggling to obtain sufficient county support, adequate staffing, and sufficient resources to fulfil their mandates. These commissions described underfunding, reliance on volunteers, multiple long-term commissioner vacancies, and a lack of regular or meaningful communication and partnership with policymakers. The BRC was advised that these challenges may be avoided by establishing strong jurisdictional support with sufficient resources and a plan for consistent communication with county leaders at the outset. [Appendix VIII provides detailed examples of successful county women’s commissions, including their areas of focus and recent accomplishments.](#)



BRC Commissioners (L-R back to front), Shayne Corriea-Fernandez, Vicki Boyd, Alexis Blount, Ph.D., Carol Enns



**"We have served every women in our county with mini-grants and gender focused policies. Women’s commissions give the County a pulse of the needs of women and girls."**

— Shay Franco-Clausen, Commissioner, Santa Clara County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls



St. Francis Catholic High School cast of "girl-A Devised Ensemble Project," International Women’s Day Event, March 8, 2019





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# V.RECOMMENDATIONS

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our review of California women's commissions, our consultation with women's commission leaders and members statewide, and our listening to women and girls in Sacramento County, the Blue Ribbon Commission recommends that the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors move to establish a Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.

From our listening to women and girls and those who work to support them in Sacramento County, we have learned that despite decades of gains for women and girls, troubling issues remain. From researching women's commissions in California, we learned that women's commissions can play a valuable role in helping their local jurisdictions better understand and address issues that affect women and girls by applying a gender lens to policy decisions and implementation.



The issues we are talking about—economic instability, mental health, homelessness, domestic violence—this is why we need a Women's Commission.

*-Rachel Rios, Executive Director La Familia Counseling Center, at the How are the Women and Girls? Virtual Forum*

The work of the Blue Ribbon Commission in its interim capacity, and the grass-roots initiative that preceded it, has already demonstrated some of the benefits of having a commission for

women and girls in Sacramento County. Women have joined together across the spectrum of issues, programs and organizations working to support women and girls in Sacramento County; and are sharing information, collaborating and supporting each other.

This is an opportune moment for Sacramento County to build upon these gains. In addition to addressing the issues we heard from women and girls, a women's commission can be a valuable resource for the Board of Supervisors and the public in mitigating the serious consequences for women of the COVID-19 pandemic. It can also help the county assert leadership in response to the gender equity and harassment issues currently surfacing by providing support, models, tools, and facilitation.

## THE TIME IS NOW

This past year represents several milestones for women internationally, nationally and locally. Internationally women are commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration of Principles advancing gender equity. Nationally, the United States commemorated the centennial of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, elected its first woman Vice-President and has seen bi-partisan growth in the number of women elected to Congress and state office.

In California, the first elected woman Lieutenant Governor was sworn into office in 2019, the first woman was recently appointed to lead the CA Highway Patrol, the first woman Chief Clerk of the California State Assembly was elected in 2020, and all five seats on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors are held by women as of 2021.

In the Sacramento region, almost 50 years since the first woman was elected to the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors, the first woman



leads the Metro Chamber of Commerce and women gained elected leadership positions in the 2020 election as mayors and on city councils.

These gains in women's leadership come amidst a national and local groundswell of support for women's voices to be heard and their experiences acknowledged. From the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements, to annual women's marches drawing women from all walks of life in cities throughout the country, women are galvanized to take the next step toward securing full equity and representation in American life.

This is an opportune moment for the county to assert leadership to address the complex issues that affect women and girls in our county.

Building on this momentum, and recognizing the role government has to play in advancing equity and accountability, the BRC has prepared the following recommendations for the establishment of a Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls:

- 1. Establish a Permanent County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.** A Commission should be established by ordinance and placed into law. It should have access to county information, data, and resources needed to fulfil its mission. We propose that such a commission be established immediately so as to recommend responses to the COVID-19 crisis, economic downturn, and public requests for increased equity and systemic justice.
- 2. Name.** We recommend that the Commission be named "The Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls." This name aligns the Commission with the worldwide movement and legacy of women's commissions dedicated to government and public accountability for the status of women and girls.
- 3. Bylaws.** The bylaws of the Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls should include a mission statement; establish the number of members and their selection procedure and term of office; establish officers, an executive committee, and election procedures; set a meeting schedule; describe commissioner duties; and require regular reports to the Board of Supervisors; establish attendance requirements, communication protocols, and amendment procedures; and propose a procedure for the adoption of amendments, and the use of Robert's Rules of Order. The Commission is empowered to create *ad hoc* committees as needed.
- 4. Purpose.** The Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls should advise the Board of Supervisors and the public on the status of women and girls in Sacramento County. It should serve as a resource to advance gender equity, justice, and well-being for all women and girls, with particular attention to increasing economic opportunities and representing marginalized, economically depressed, and traditionally underrepresented communities.
- 5. Role.** The Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls should serve to address barriers to equity and ensure greater awareness, accountability and integrated planning of services and programs. The Commission can serve as a liaison and a hub of information between the Board of Supervisors and the women and girls in Sacramento County, linking them to county and community resources, data and information and each other. The Commission should work for greater engagement between county government, cities and the public, serving as a vehicle for the Board to receive continual feedback from women and girls regarding the best use of resources.





- 6. Responsibilities.** The Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls should advise the County Board of Supervisors and the public on issues of gender equity and women's and girls' well-being; it will be a resource for study, data, and recommendations on matters concerning discrimination and inequity pertaining to women and girls on the basis of gender.

The Commission can, on its own initiative, hold public hearings, publish reports, collect data, convene and recommend programs, policies, and legislation to promote and ensure equal rights and opportunities for all women and girls in Sacramento County. The Commission should maintain a clearinghouse and hub of information of data, local programs, and services.

- 7. Commission Membership.** The Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls should include members reflecting a cross-section of the diverse communities of women within Sacramento County, and it should be inclusive of communities outside the urban core of the City of Sacramento.

The Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls should comprise fifteen members: five appointed by the Board of Supervisors, three youth members appointed by the Board of Supervisors, and seven at-large members. The youth members will be appointed for one-year terms, with a limit of two consecutive terms. The remaining twelve members will be appointed for three-year terms, with a limit of two consecutive terms.

Each Supervisor will appoint one member from their district. The board as a whole will appoint three youth members who may be current students or identified by other criteria as appropriate. We recommend that one of

the youth members be a liaison from the Sacramento County Youth Commission. The remaining seven commissioners would be at-large members designated in consultation with the Board of Supervisors by the BRC until an official "Friends of the Sacramento Commission on the Status of Women and Girls" 501(c)(3) is established and can take on the application process.

Commissioner terms will be staggered at first. In the first year of the commission, four members will be given a one-year term, four a two-year term, and four a three-year term. All terms will be three years thereafter, to maintain continuity.

- 8. Funding.** The Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls should receive adequate resources and funding to support a robust and effective commission that fulfills its mandate and identifies and facilitates the County's response to issues affecting women and girls. Resources include both dedicated staff time within the County and operations funds to enable the Commission to be formed and begin its work. As soon as possible, the Board of Supervisors should designate ongoing General Fund monies to properly resource and staff the commission directly.

The BRC understands the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the county's budget, and also recognizes the disproportionate adverse impact the pandemic has had on the lives of women and children in Sacramento County. Given current fiscal challenges, we recommend a limited but expandable commitment of county funds and staff support in the first two years of the Commission's operation.

We suggest that beginning with year three, the Board of Supervisors together with the Women's Commission consider a plan to create an Office of



Women's Policy. This office will elevate women's issues and serve to staff the commission.

Over the years, major policy initiatives and/or women-focused activities may require outside funding in a public-private partnership with the county. It is for this reason we recommend the Commission explore opportunities for partnership between the Commission and other entities, including the potential creation of a 501(c)(3) entity known as the "Friends of the Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls." This partnership would enable the Commission on the Status of Women and Girls to raise outside funding and seek grants for special projects. [See Appendix IX for an example of a funding implementation timeline.](#)



WEAVE Listening Circle

## NEXT STEPS: TIMELINE

**December 2020:** Establish a Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls in statute.

**February 2021:** Approve and implement the commissioner application/selection process.

**March 2021:** Develop commissioner orientation manual and process.

**April/May 2021:** Appoint commissioners.

**May/June 2021:** Swear in new commissioners.

**June 2021:** Conduct commissioner orientation.



BRC Commissioners Tonya D. Lindsey, Ph.D. and Charlene Goehring at a community meeting





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## V. CONCLUSION

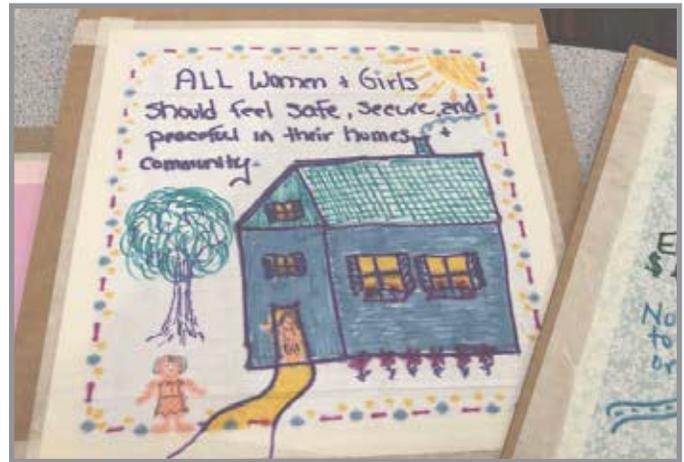
## CONCLUSION

The members of the BRC would like to thank the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors for this inspiring opportunity to be of service through this inquiry into the efficacy of a commission for women and girls in Sacramento County. Our exploration was grounded in a question about the well-being of women and girls in Sacramento County so that we could understand how a women's commission might best serve them. Our inquiry was interim and limited in its capacity. But through this process, we found that women and girls were enthusiastic about being heard and represented, and that there are important issues which can be addressed with a consistent focus on their needs.

During the course of our work significant issues have emerged, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and gender equity concerns in our county and local city governments. These developments reinforce the importance and necessity of a government body with a dedicated focus on women and girls.

The BRC has built a strong foundation of engagement, collaboration and research upon which a high-functioning and dynamic commission can be built. It is our hope that the county will continue to demonstrate its commitment to supporting women and girls with the establishment of a permanent commission that can more fully and regularly ask and answer our fundamental question: **How are the women and girls of Sacramento County?**

Today as we ask this question, we stand more hopeful, glimpsing the possibility that we can come together with purpose, focus, and intention to advance equity and opportunity through a permanent Sacramento County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.



Quilt art from a "How Are The Women and Girls? Listening Circle" participant



The vision of women's commissions internationally, nationally and across California is for women and girls to experience fairness and equity in all areas of life, including housing, health care, safety, high-quality education, criminal justice, employment and economic opportunity. Because women's experiences and issues are often distinctive based on unique needs and long-standing structures of inequity, it is important that government policy, programs and structures view and understand key decisions through a gender lens to discern how policies and decisions will impact women and girls specifically.

[-sacramentoblueribboncommission.com](https://sacramentoblueribboncommission.com)





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## VIII. APPENDICES



## APPENDIX I. MEMBERS OF SACRAMENTO FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

- Haley Ausserer
- Lee Battershell
- Emily Bender
- Alexis Blount, Ph.D.
- Debbie Richardson Brewster
- Vicki Boyd
- Lisa Culp
- Linda Farley, Ph.D.
- Charmen Goehring
- Kendra Harris
- Beth Hassett
- Dina Howard
- Maya Howard
- Marian Johnston
- Karen Grace Kaho
- Tonya D. Lindsey, Ph.D.
- Ali Lichtenstein, Ph.D.
- Danielle Metzinger
- Maranell “Marty” McKnew
- Beryl Michaels
- JoAnna Michaels
- Molly Phillips-Nugent
- Sahana Rajiyah
- Erin Saberi
- Sister Jean Schafer, S.D.S.
- Susan Stone
- Dawn Taylor
- Phyllis Watts
- Chantay White



## APPENDIX II. MEMBERS OF BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SACRAMENTO COUNTY WOMEN'S COMMISSION

- Haley Ausserer, Sacramento For Women and Girls
- Bernice Bass de Martinez, Ph.D., Office of the Dean of Arts & Letters, Sacramento State
- Lee Battershell/P.J. Missman, AAUW-CHAR, Sacramento For Women and Girls
- Donna Begay, Ph.D., Tubatuabal Tribe
- Emily Bender, Sacramento For Women and Girls
- Alexis Blount, Ph.D., Sacramento For Women and Girls
- Vicki Boyd, Sacramento For Women and Girls, Women's Wisdom Art
- Caroline Cabias, Trustee UC Davis Foundation Board, Latino Economic Council of Sacramento
- Shayne Corriea-Fernandez, SWAG
- Lisa Culp, Executive Director, Women's Empowerment, Sacramento For Women & Girls
- Carol Enns, League of Women Voters of Sacramento County
- Linda Farley, Ph.D., CEO, Girl Scouts Heart of Central California
- Charmen Goehring, AAUW Sacramento, Sacramento For Women and Girls
- Crystal Harding/Paris Dye, Black Child Legacy
- Beth Hassett, Executive Director WEAVE, Inc.
- Dina Howard, Sacramento For Women and Girls
- Maya Howard, Sacramento For Women and Girls
- Marian Johnston, Sacramento For Women & Girls
- Eulonda Kay Lea, Author, CASA Volunteer
- Bina Lefkowitz, Sacramento County Board of Education
- Leslie Levitas, National Council of Jewish Women
- Ali Tucker Lichtenstein, Ph.D., Women's Wisdom Art
- Tonya D. Lindsey, Ph.D., Sacramento For Women and Girls
- Maranell "Marty" McKnew, AAUW Sacramento, Sacramento For Women and Girls
- Danielle Metzinger, NxtGov, AAUW, Sacramento, Sacramento For Women and Girls
- Sheree Meyer, Ph.D., Dean, Sacramento State University College of Arts and Letters
- Jaclyn Moreno, Board Member, Cosumnes Community Services District
- Molly Phillips-Nugent, Ambassador to California, United State of Women
- Alana Ramsay, Student, Sacramento State University
- Rachel Rios, Executive Director, La Familia Counseling Center
- Erin Saberi, Sacramento For Women and Girls
- Susan Stone, Sacramento For Women and Girls
- Jessie Tientcheu/Suzan Boulard, Opening Doors
- Nilda Guanzon Valmores, Executive Director, My Sister's House



**Past Members of the BRC:**

- Bridget Alexander, Waking the Village
- Boatamo Mosupyoe, Ph.D., Associate Dean Resources and Program Management, College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies, Sacramento State University
- Zima Creason, San Juan Unified Board of Education
- Shannon Dominguez-Stevens, Sacramento Loaves and Fishes
- Dee Dee Gilliam, DNP, RN, PHN, Director of Health & Wellness, Los Rios Community College District
- Kendra Harris, former Executive Director, CA Commission on the Status of Women and Girls
- Cassandra Jennings, C.E.O., Greater Sacramento Urban League
- Faye Wilson Kennedy, Author/Community Leader
- JoAnna Michaels, M.S.W., Veteran
- Nia Mooreweathers, Youth Forward



## APPENDIX III. BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION AD HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND GUEST SPEAKERS

### Ad Hoc Advisory Committees

*Ad Hoc* Advisory Committee on Assessing Needs  
*Ad Hoc* Advisory Committee on Commission Models  
*Ad Hoc* Advisory Committee on Data and Information  
*Ad Hoc* Advisory Committee on Resources  
*Ad Hoc* Advisory Committee on Youth

### **Guest Speakers**

#### **December 2nd, 2019**

Emily M. Murase, Ph.D., Director, San Francisco Department on the Status of Women  
Ali Lichenstein, Executive Director, Women's Wisdom Art  
Marian Johnston, CA Department of Justice and CA State Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, retired.

#### **January 21st, 2020**

Lisa Culp, Executive Director, Women's Empowerment  
Iyana Blackwell, Graduate, Women's Empowerment  
Rick Heyer, Sacramento County Council's Office  
Leslie Parker, Assistant to Dr. Linda Farley, Girl Scouts Heart of Central California

#### **February 19th, 2020**

Rabbi Nancy Wechsler, Congregation Beth Shalom

#### **May 19th, 2020**

Judy Robinson, Manager, Sacramento County Census  
Rachel Rios, Executive Director, La Familia Counseling Center Counseling Center  
Gloria Ibarra-Fisher, La Familia Counseling Center

#### **June 17th, 2020**

Jan Scully, Board Chair, Sacramento Regional Family Justice Center  
Faith Whitmore, C.E.O., Sacramento Regional Family Justice Center

#### **July 8th, 2020**

Nilda Valmores, Executive Director, My Sister's House

#### **August 11, 2020**

Tiffani Fink, CEO, Paratransit Inc.  
Janice Blalock, former Chair, Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls  
Catherine (Cat) Martin, Sonoma County Junior Commission  
Ariana Diaz De Leon, Sonoma County Junior Commission

#### **September 2, 2020**

Scott Young, Carmichael HART  
Heather Wheeler, Carmichael HART



## APPENDIX IV. INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

- Rochelle L. Arnold, Veterans Service Officer, Sacramento County
- Janice Blalock, Past Chair, Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women, CA Associations of Women Commission Northern CA Representative
- Stephanie Bray, C.E.O., United Way California Capital Region
- Verna Liza Caba, Executive Director, Friends of the Commission on the Status of Women, San Francisco
- Caroline Cabias, UC Davis Foundation Board Member, La Familia Board Member
- Michelle Callejas, Director Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services
- Shay Franco Clausen, Chair, Santa Clara County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls
- Laura Clegg, A Community For Peace
- Suzanne Doty, former Chair Santa Clara County Commission on the Status of Women and former Chair, Association of California Women's Commissions
- Ann Edwards, Director, Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance
- Natalie Fujikawa, Board President, Sacramento LGBT Community Center
- Julie Gallelo, Executive Director, First Five Sacramento Commission
- DeeDee Gilliam, Director of Health and Wellness, Los Rios Community College District
- Britta Guerrero, Executive Director, Sacramento Native American Health Center (SNAHC)
- David Haitsuman, C.E.O., Sacramento LGBT Community Center
- Leesa Hooks, Senior Public Health Nurse, Sacramento County Office of Public Health and Jackie Washington Ansly, Perinatal Services Coordinator
- Cassandra Jennings, C.E.O., Greater Sacramento Urban League
- La Kenya Jordan, Executive Director, California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls
- Bina Lefkowitz, Sacramento County Board of Education
- Pat Miller, Director Agency on Aging Area 4
- Scott Moak, First Five Commission
- Emily Murase, Ph.D., Director, Office of Women's Policy, San Francisco
- Stephanie Nguyen, Executive Director, Asian Resources, Inc./Elk Grove City Councilmember
- Jennifer Prisk, former Chair San Diego Commission on the Status of Women and former Chair, Association of CA Women's Commissions
- Rachel Rios, Executive Director, La Familia Counseling Center, Inc.
- Nancy Kirshner Rodriguez, Former Executive Director, CA Commission on Women & Girls and former Chair, San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women
- Meghan Masera-Rose, LeadingAge California
- Ann Marie Schubert, Sacramento County District Attorney
- Kim Tucker, Executive Director, Impact Foundry
- Nilda Valmores, Executive Director, My Sister's House
- Inez Whitlow, Chicks-N-Crisis
- April Wick, Independent Living Center Sacramento
- RoLanda Wilkins, Earth Mama Healing



## APPENDIX V. ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN LISTENING CIRCLES AND THE VIRTUAL FORUM

### Listening Circles

- A Community for Peace
- Liberty Towers, Black Child Legacy Campaign/Foothill Farms High School
- Mira Loma High School
- My Sister's House
- NxtGov
- Planned Parenthood
- Sacramento State University
- St. John's Program for Real Change
- Women's Wisdom Art
- WEAVE

### Virtual Forum Co-Hosts

- American Association of University Women - Citrus Heights American River
- Earth Mama Healing
- First Five
- Girls Rock, Inc.
- Girl Scouts Heart of Central California
- Health Education Council
- Impact Foundry, Inc.
- La Familia Community Counseling
- League of Women Voters
- My Sister's House
- Sacramento For Women & Girls
- SWAG
- UpTown Studios
- WEAVE
- Women's Empowerment
- Women For Equality
- Women's Wisdom Art



## APPENDIX VI. LIST OF CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S COMMISSIONS RESEARCHED BY THE BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION

### County Commissions

All are active except as noted. All were founded in the 1970s with the exception of the Sonoma County Youth Commission in 1993, San Mateo County in 1982 and Solano County in 2018. Eleven of the 20 commissions listed below have some level of county staffing to support their mission.

#### Alameda County

17 members, 3 per supervisor and 1 appointed by Mayor's conference, one representative of Human Relations Commission; 2 year terms, 2 term limit

Receives staff support

<http://www.alamedasocialservices.org/csw/index.htm>

#### Contra Costa County

12 members, 1 per supervisor, 7 at large, 3 year term, no limit

<http://www.womenscommission.com/about-us/member-list.html>

#### Fresno County

9 members, 1 per supervisor, 2 college students, 2 year term, no limit

<https://bosbcc.co.fresno.ca.us/Committees/CommitteeDetails/?committeeId=59>

<http://www.womenscommission.com/about-us/member-list.html>

#### Humboldt County

10 members, 1 per supervisor, 5 at large, 4 year term, no limit

Inactive

#### Los Angeles County

15 members, 3 per supervisor, 5 at large

Receives staff support

<http://laccw.lacounty.gov/>

#### Marin County

11 members, 2 per supervisor, 1 at large, 3 year term, 2 term limit

Receives staff support

<https://marinwomenscommission.net/>

#### Monterey County

15 members, 3 per supervisor, 3 year term, no term limit

Receives staff support

<https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-i-z/social-services/commission-on-the-status-of-women>

#### Riverside County

10 members



#### San Diego County

13 members, 2 per supervisor, 3 at large, 2 year term, 2 term limit

Receives staff support and funding through Community Enhancement Programs

<http://www.statusofwomensd.org/>

#### San Francisco City and County

7 members appointed by the Mayor, 4 year terms renewable

7 full-time staff within the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women

<https://sfgov.org/dosw/san-francisco-commission-status-women>

#### San Joaquin County

Open membership, not recognized by BOS

#### San Luis Obispo County

15 members, 3 per supervisor, 4 year term, no term limit

County budget and office in county building

<http://slowomen.org/>

#### San Mateo County

17 at large members, 4 year term, 3 term limit, 2 youth members, 2 year term

Receives staff support

<https://csw.smcgov.org/>

#### Santa Barbara County

15 members, 3 per supervisor, 3 year term, 3 term limit

Receives staff support and funding for expenses

<http://www.countyofsb.org/cfw/>

#### Santa Clara County Office of Women's Policy (OWP)

15 members appointed by BOS, 3 year term, no term limit

A department within the Office of the County Executive's Equity & Social Justice Division

<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/owp/board/pages/csw.aspx>

#### Santa Cruz County

10 members, 2 per supervisor, 3 year term, no term limit

#### Solano County, established 2018

17 members, 1 per supervisor, 1 per city (7), Solano County Office of Education, 4 at large (2 adult and 2 youth)

[https://www.solanocounty.com/depts/county\\_admin/commission\\_for\\_women\\_and\\_girls.asp](https://www.solanocounty.com/depts/county_admin/commission_for_women_and_girls.asp)

#### Sonoma County

15 members, 3 per supervisor, 2 year term, no term limit

Receives staff support and expenses

<http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Commission-on-the-Status-of-Women/>





Sonoma County Junior Commission on the Status of Women  
10-16 members at large, term is the school year, no limit

Stanislaus County  
12 members, open to all, non-governmental

### **City Commissions**

In addition to the 20 active county commissions, 6 California cities have active women's commissions advising their city councils on issues such as domestic violence, gender equity, homelessness, human trafficking and sexual harassment. All receive financial and staff support from the city.

#### **City of Berkeley**

9 members, 1 per each District supervisor, 1 by major

[https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/Commissions/Commissions Commission on the Status of Women Homepage.aspx](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/Commissions/Commissions_Commission_on_the_Status_of_Women_Homepage.aspx)

#### **City of Glendale**

5 members plus 2 student interns, 3 year terms, 3 term limits

<https://www.glendaleca.gov/government/departments/management-services/commission-on-the-status-of-women>

#### **City of Los Angeles**

7 members

Has staff support

<https://hcidla2.lacity.org/community-resources/commission-on-the-status-of-women>

#### **City of Pasadena**

9 members, 1 by each of 7 Council members, 1 by major and 1 by city council as a whole, 3 year term, 2 term limit

Receives city funding for staff support

<https://www.cityofpasadena.net/commissions/commission-on-the-status-of-women/>

#### **City of Santa Monica**

9 members appointed by city council, 4 year term, 2 term limit

Receives city funding

#### **City of West Hollywood Women's Advisory Board**

9 members, 1 each by council members and 4 by the council as a whole, 2 year term

Receives city funding and staff position

<https://www.weho.org/city-government/boards-commissions/advisory-boards/women-s-advisory-board>



## APPENDIX VII. HISTORY/BACKGROUND OF WOMEN'S COMMISSIONS

The formal global and national vision for promoting equality and well-being for women and girls emerged over seven decades ago with the establishment of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in June 1946. Fifteen years later in 1961, President John F. Kennedy created the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) to examine issues affecting women in the United States. The PCSW focused on the status of women in the areas of education, child care, labor standards, employment, equal pay, benefits, community planning, property rights, and women in political office.

Encouraged by the work of this presidential commission, local commissions began forming around the country. By 1967, women's commissions were considered so important that they had been established in all 50 states, including California.

### WOMEN'S COMMISSIONS IN CALIFORNIA

The California Commission on the Status of Women was created in 1965 “with a view to developing recommendations which will enable women to make the maximum contribution to society ([CA Government Code 8240](#)).” The work of the California state commission continues today in regularly assessing gender equity for women and girls in health, safety, employment, education, and equal representation in the military, and the media. In recent years, the CA state commission has led the way in addressing the pay gap and implementation of the state's landmark legislation for equal pay, [SB 358](#). (Jackson 2015).

In addition to the California State Commission, now known as the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, there are 26 women's commissions in cities and counties throughout California. These commissions advise local governments and the public on issues affecting women and girls and advocate for gender equity in local policy and its implementation.

Most of the county commissions the BRC researched were established in the 1970s and 1980s, during a time of heightened public interest in gender equity and social justice. Since that time, some commissions have been quite successful, growing their influence and mandate, while others' successes have waned. In recent years, there has been renewed interest in the work of women's commissions with the revitalization of the California State Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, a new Solano County commission and efforts underway to form women's commissions in Orange and Sacramento Counties. Commissions for women and girls throughout California have led efforts and progress on issues affecting women and girls such as poverty, economic well-being, homelessness, domestic violence, veteran status, incarceration, childcare, education, access to STEM education, and pay equity. Women's commissions also are advocating and raising awareness about policy priorities and the availability of accessible data to inform policy decisions.



## APPENDIX VIII. EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL COUNTY WOMEN'S COMMISSIONS

### **Santa Clara County Commission on the Status of Women**

Established in 1973, the commission includes 15 members appointed by the Board of Supervisors for three year terms. The commission is one of four commissions with the County Executive's Equity and Social Justice Division and works hand-in-hand with the Santa Clara County Office of Women's Policy.

The commission is currently focused on economic advancement, women and girls leadership, gender based violence, women and girls justice, and the [Cities for CEDAW](#) campaign. Recent accomplishments include:

- Justice System Reform: interviewed incarcerated women and gathered data on women in the criminal justice system, recommended and instituted monitoring programs for women in jail. Published report on 'shackling' of women inmates, which resulted in change to State laws (no pregnant women can be shackled while in labor).
- Worker's Rights: held a public forum after firing of women who complained about sexual harassment, which led to funding for worker's rights programs.
- Complete gender analysis of county programs and services for women.
- Domestic Violence Prevention: advocated for additional county funding for domestic violence prevention which resulted in the budget increasing from less than \$500,000 to \$12 million of general fund.
- County Government Structure: success led to the development of the County Executive's Division of Equity and Social Service, Office of Gender-Based Violence Prevention, and Office of LGBTQ Affairs.

### **Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women**

Established in 1975, the commission includes 15 members (3 appointed by each supervisor) for two year terms. The commission is affiliated with the county's Human Resources department. The commission is currently focused on issues of human trafficking, elder abuse, domestic violence, mental healthcare, and women in elected office. The commission works closely with community organizations. Accomplishments include:

- Established the Sonoma Junior Commission on the Status of Women aligned to the goals of the county commission to develop and mentor high school youth for future leadership roles in the community.
- Conducted listening sessions in every district as well as county women's jail as part of the National Association of Women's Commissions Voices of Women National Survey.

### **San Francisco Commission and Department on the Status of Women**

Established in 1975, the commission includes 7 members (appointed by the Mayor) for four year terms, and 7 full-time staff within the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women.



The commission is currently focused on the [Cities for CEDAW](#) campaign, family violence prevention, and human trafficking. Accomplishments include:

- Established a Family Violence Council, Human Trafficking Taskforce, and NGO Forum.
- Complete gender analysis of county programs and services.
- Provide public service directories and resources for pay equity, health, and grants.

### **San Diego County Commission on the Status of Women & Girls**

Established in 1975, the commission includes 13 members (2 per supervisor) for two year terms, as well as three members-at-large who are nominated by the Commission and approved by the Board of Supervisors to serve two year terms. The commission is currently focused on the [Cities for CEDAW](#) campaign, human trafficking, homelessness, and domestic violence prevention. Accomplishments include:

- Established a Women's Hall of Fame.
- Convened a Status of Women and Girls annual symposium.



## APPENDIX IX. EXAMPLE FUNDING IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

### **January, 1 2021–June 30, 2021**

County staff will be designated to assist with the formation and work of the Commission.

### **Year 1: July 2021–June 2022**

Assign part-time duties to a current county employee to assist Commissioners with administrative duties and initial planning and priority-setting consistent with and in support of the County's overall program priorities. Provide \$20,000 for commission activities and expenses to cover costs such as convenings, reports and data analysis.

### **Year 2: July 2022–June 2023**

Assign part-time duties to a current county employee to assist Commissioners with administrative duties, implementation of priorities and operations. Provide \$25,000 for commission activities and expenses.

### **Years 3 and 4: July 2023–June 2025**

Assign part-time duties to a current county employee to assist Commissioners with administrative duties, implementation of priorities and operations. Develop proposal for creation of a County Office of Women's Policy; outline funding needs and full-time staff structure; implement by June 2025. Sufficient funds should be available to accomplish this.





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## TO CONTACT US:

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