



VIRGINIA
COUNCIL
ON
Women

Executive Recommendations 2021

[DRAFT DOCUMENT]

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2020-2021 Virginia Council on Women

Members

- Ashley Reynolds Marshall, M.P.A., J.D. - Chairwoman
- Heather Caputo
- Nicole Carry
- Margie Del Castillo
- Marisol Morales-Diaz
- Lashawn Farmer
- Diana Gates
- Courtney Hill
- Aisha Johnson -- Secretary
- Da'Shaun A. Joseph
- Ramunda Lark Young
- Aesha Mehta
- Karishma Merchant
- Kara Moran
- Kelley Powell
- Tara Roundtree
- Holly Seibold
- Michelle Strucke - Vice Chair
- Brigitta Toruño
- Michelle Woods, M.Ed.

Ex Officio Members

- Kelly Thomasson, Secretary of the Commonwealth

Administration

- Suzanne M. Holland, Special Assistant for Advisory Board Administration

2021-2022 Virginia Council on Women

Members¹

- Ashley Reynolds Marshall, M.P.A., J.D. -- Chairwoman
- Marzia Abbasi
- Mary Kate Andris, Ed.D.
- Heather Caputo
- Nicole Carry
- Margie Del Castillo
- Lashawn Farmer
- Diana Gates
- Kristina Hagen
- Courtney Hill
- Aisha Johnson -- Secretary
- Alencia Johnson
- Da'Shaun A. Joseph
- Hyun Lee
- Aesha Mehta
- Karishma Merchant
- Marisol Morales-Diaz
- Kara Moran
- Donna Price
- Ramunda Lark Young
- Holly Seibold
- Advisory Member: Kelley Powell

Ex Officio Members

- Kelly Thomasson, Secretary of the Commonwealth

Administration

- Suzanne M. Holland, Special Assistant for Advisory Board Administration

¹ At the time of drafting the Council on Women had not elected their 2022 Officers so 2021 officers continue to serve.

About the Virginia Council on Women

The Virginia Council on Women (Council) is established by § 2.2-2630 as an advisory council in the Executive branch of state government. The purpose of the Council is to identify ways in which women can reach their full potential and make their full contribution to society and the Commonwealth.

The Council consists of 18 or more members from around the state, who are appointed by the Governor, as well as one of the Governor's Secretaries who serves as an ex-officio member with full voting privileges. Members serve a term of three years and may be reappointed. Over the past several years, the Council has focused its efforts on engaging and empowering women through STEM, healthcare, and convening.

Purpose

1. Determine the studies and research to be conducted by the Council;
2. Collect and disseminate information regarding the status of women in the Commonwealth and the nation;
3. Advise the Governor, General Assembly and the Governor's Secretaries on matters pertaining to women in the Commonwealth and the nation;
4. Establish and award scholarships pursuant to regulations and conditions prescribed by the Council;
5. Review and comment on all budgets, appropriation requests and grant applications concerning the Council, prior to their submission to the Secretary of Health and Human Resources or the Governor; and
6. Develop programs and projects on matters pertaining to women in the Commonwealth and the nation through public-private partnerships.

The Council focuses its work on four key areas that are important to the prosperity of women and girls in the Commonwealth. Board members serve on committees to help advance these areas.

Committees

Community Engagement Subcommittee

The Community Engagement Subcommittee assesses the engagement of the adults and children in the Commonwealth who identify as women in the areas of public services and programs, voter engagement, and civic participation. We explore the barriers to awareness and access for women & girls; as well as improving communication between the Administration, service and program providers, and our disparate communities.

- o 2020-2021 Chairwoman: **Aisha Johnson**
- o 2021-2022 Chairwoman: TBD

Education Equity Subcommittee

The Education Equity Subcommittee, formerly known as the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Initiative Subcommittee, is focused on ensuring that the adults and children in the Commonwealth who identify as women have fair and inclusive opportunities across the spectrum of educational opportunities. The subcommittee's most notable contribution is their annual STEAM-H Essay Contest which began in 2012 under Governor Bob McDonnell's administration. The contest awards high school seniors who identify as women and wish to pursue STEAM-H majors and careers with scholarships to aid with their tuition at institutions of higher education which include four-year colleges and universities, community colleges, and career and technical schools in the Commonwealth and throughout the United States. The Council has awarded more than \$150,000 in scholarships.

- STEAM-H Essay Contest: Each year the Virginia Council on Women (Council) will provide two scholarships, one merit-based and one need-based, in each of five geographic regions across the Commonwealth. Award amounts may vary and are determined by the Council annually.
 - o 2020-2021 Chairwoman: **Da'Shaun Joseph**
 - o 2021-2022 Chairwoman: **Da'Shaun Joseph**

Healthcare Equity Subcommittee

The Health Equity Subcommittee, formerly the Healthcare Initiative Subcommittee, works to ensure that all adults and children in the Commonwealth who identify as women have fair, inclusive, and culturally competent holistic healthcare access in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The subcommittee develops recommendations on what the state government can achieve to improve access to quality healthcare for women, girls, citizens who identify as women, and families across the state since its establishment in August 2013.

- 2020-2021 Chairwoman: **Michelle Strucke**
- 2021-2022 Chairwoman: **Diana Gates**

Workforce Equity Subcommittee

The Workforce Equity Subcommittee, established by the Council in 2020, is committed to creating and cultivating a fair, inclusive, and just workforce for all the adults and children in the Commonwealth who identify as women. The increased amplification and elevation of diverse women will be achieved in a variety of ways including through partnerships and mentorship programs to ensure women have access to fair wage employment, entrepreneurial opportunities, employer or quality self-paid healthcare, quality multi-shift child care, and pay equity.

- 2020-2021 Chairwomen: **Ramunda Lark-Young & Brigitta Toruño**
- 2021-2022 Chairwomen: **Ramunda Lark-Young & Brigitta Toruño**

Virginia Council on Women Recommendations

*Pursuant to Section 2.2-2630 of the Code of Virginia, the Virginia Council on Women (VCW) is pleased to submit to the Honorable Ralph S. Northam its annual executive recommendations which will be focused on the Council's 2020-2021 holistic exploration of the needs of the adults and children in the Commonwealth who identify as female. **The VCW recommends the following actions separated by Subcommittee:***

Civic Engagement Subcommittee

The Council on Women has the following recommendations focused on healthcare equity. These recommendations are suggested to be reviewed not only by the Governor and his team, the Governor-elect and his team. The recommendations are also suggested to be reviewed by the Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer Dr. Janice Underwood.

- **Civic Participation Matters for Virginia Women**
 - The Council on Women recommends that an initiative be created to focus on civil participation matters. This initiative is recommended to include learning about Civic Engagement and why it matters, using action/participation-oriented tools and resources, practicing using community advocacy skills, and engaging directly in advocacy themselves. This kind of programming would engage members of our Commonwealth who are often absent from civic engagement and its opportunities for leadership - the adults and children who are women.
- **Town Hall Series**
 - The Council on Women recommends that Community-Based town halls are created across the five regions of Virginia. This series would work to build social movements to navigate local and state governments, using technology to create change, and would partner with local organizations and connect women with information, education, and networks. These would also work to engage all of the Commonwealth by being regional and accessible.
- **Women Leadership Initiative**

- The Council on Women recommends that a course would be created and initiated through the state that would be “A Course for Action”
- **Intersectionality Recognition**
 - The Council on Women would further state that intersectionality, a term coined by Professor Kimberlee Crenshaw, is critical to the forward movement of women and girls in the Commonwealth who find themselves in multiple marginalized communities. The Council would recommend that an additional review of laws and policies be undertaken as a partnership between the commissions to review racial equity and a commission to review gender equity to ensure that the nuance required to fully support women and girls of color, who are LGBTQIA, and who may be differently-abled are also supported fully.
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice**
 - Create a permanent Secretariat of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
 - Continue to fund the Equity Dashboards and place them under the management of the Secretary of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Education Equity Subcommittee

The Council on Women has the following recommendations focused on healthcare equity. These recommendations are suggested to be reviewed not only by the Governor and his team, the Governor-elect and his team, as well as the Secretary of Education Atif Qarni, Chancellor Glenn DuBois of Virginia's Community Colleges, as well as with Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer Dr. Janice Underwood.

- **STEAM**

- The Council on Women believes that the ARTS in STEAM is critical. We would request that the Secretary update the name of the current STEM committee to use the industry and education adopted moniker of STEAM for more equitable and inclusive opportunities in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics.

- **G3**

- The Council on Women is very thankful for the current G3 tuition assistance program for any Virginia resident who qualifies for in-state tuition and whose family income falls below an identified threshold. This provides all Virginians including folx who identify as women the opportunity to engage in five of our Commonwealth's most in-demand industries. However, the Council would encourage the program to consider raising the total household income to incorporate a sliding scale for folks who are 401% to 600% of FPL. The reason for this suggestion is that household income does not take into consideration a more accurate calculator of fiscal capacity - income. A family could earn over 400% FPL, but be unable to expend income for educational opportunities due to many factors including existing education debt, healthcare debt, rent overburdens, etc. This will ensure that more women, girls, and individuals who identify as women have the opportunity to engage in this program, which will also strengthen the workforce of the Commonwealth.

- **Community College Access**

- The Council on Women is thankful for a strong Community College system in the Commonwealth. We would encourage increased consideration of asynchronous hybrid classes to allow folx who identify as women increased access to the educational courses, certificates, and degrees that our Community Colleges offer. Our constituents are caregivers, multiple part-time job workers, full-time 9-5ers, and more. Having to risk their income to attend a required course at 3 pm on a weekday is unattainable. Yet the one thing the pandemic showed is that we have the technology to provide access to these excellent courses, and we hope you will agree.
- Further, the Council on Women would suggest the implementation of child care access for any student on campus. Currently, over 9,000 requests for child care referrals have been made in the Commonwealth, so the need is very clear statewide². Further, the Child Care Aware of America nonprofit has reported that child care is more expensive than in-state tuition at the public universities in at least 30 states.

- **Universal Pre-K**

- Support universal pre-k. Virginia should view childcare as a critical infrastructure. During the COVID-19 health crisis, one in four women nationwide are considering leaving the workforce. This is largely attributed to a lack of childcare.

² Child Care Aware® of America. 2021. *Child Care Data by State: Virginia*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.childcareaware.org/our-issues/research/ccdc/?submissionGuid=000bc33d-6671-403b-9b5b-0a74967170da>> [Accessed 19 October 2021].

Healthcare Equity Subcommittee

The Council on Women has the following recommendations focused on healthcare equity. These recommendations are suggested to be reviewed not only by the Governor and his team, the Governor-elect and his team. The recommendations are also suggested to be reviewed by the Secretary of Health and Human Resources Daniel Carey, M.D., as well as with Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer Dr. Janice Underwood.

- **Dental Care Access**

- As of 2020, there were 3.2 million Virginians who have no dental insurance and 67 Virginia localities had no dental safety net provider. Further, while 66 Virginia localities now have a community dental provider, many providers are only offered on a part-time basis. The Council on Women encourages the Governor to work to increase access to dental care in two ways: First, to increase access beyond Medicaid expansion to citizens who earn 300% of FPL. Second, initiate incentives to allow more dental hygienists, technicians, and dentists to be trained and then deployed in underserved communities for consistent access and who will enroll as Medicaid providers.

- **Maternal Health Care**

- Initiate a two-year pilot program that provides a targeted, direct cash supplemental benefit to the lowest income pregnant women and mothers who are at most risk of experiencing the impacts of racial bias, modeled after San Francisco's Abundant Birth Project.³ This monthly income benefit is a simple, innovative way to increase economic and reproductive power during pregnancy and in the months immediately following the birth of a child
- Develop a partnership with major Virginia hospitals and birthing centers to develop, provide, and train staff on the use of a tool kit that includes everything needed to tackle emergency complications, based on the successful model

³ Mayor London Breed Announces Launch of Pilot Program to Provide Basic Income to Black and Pacific Islander Women During Pregnancy, retrieved October 8, 2020 from <https://sfmayor.org/article/mayor-london-breed-announces-launch-pilot-program-provide-basic-income-black-and-pacific>

developed in California that helped the state cut maternal deaths in half.⁴ The Commonwealth of Virginia should partner with a major research university, as well as key nonprofit organizations, to create a collaborative model modeled after the California Maternal Quality Care Collaborative, which uses a multistakeholder approach to achieve gains in the reduction of maternal mortality.

- Continue to ensure that members of the Commonwealth are aware of the work that the Department of Health and Human Services is performing to level the playing field for mothers and babies across the Commonwealth. We continue to encourage town hall-style meetings to continue the open and transparent lines of communication on this issue by allowing mothers and loved ones of mothers additional engage with the Department.
- Improve, standardize, and make publicly available data on demographics as part of the plan that includes race, ethnicity, gender identity, and other information that is important to reducing health and healthcare disparities.

⁴ NPR, To Keep Women from Dying in Childbirth, Look to California, available at <https://www.npr.org/2018/07/29/632702896/to-keep-women-from-dying-in-childbirth-look-to-california>. According to the article, “From 2006 to 2013, the maternal death rate in California fell 55 percent. These protocols — the checklists, carts, drills and teamwork — have not only saved women from dying, but they have also dramatically reduced the rate of women who nearly died. A study in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology found hospitals that signed up to implement the toolkits lowered the rate of severe maternal morbidity due to hemorrhage by nearly 21 percent. In hospitals not participating, that rate dropped by just over 1 percent. As of June 2018, 88 percent of California’s birthing hospitals have joined, accounting for 95 percent of all the births in the state.”

Workforce Equity Subcommittee

The Council on Women has the following recommendations focused on workforce equity. These recommendations are suggested to be reviewed not only by the Governor and his team, the Governor-elect and his team. The recommendations are also suggested to be reviewed by the Secretary of Labor Megan Healy, Ph.D., Secretary of Commerce and Trade Brian Bell, as well as with Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer Dr. Janice Underwood

- **Paid Leave**

- Support paid maternity/paternity, and family medical leave for all Virginia families. Eight states and Washington, DC have successfully offered this benefit, which restores dignity and economic stability for families experiencing the birth or adoption of a child, or a family member's medical crisis. Virginians should not be left unattended in their greatest time of need due to the need for a paycheck. The Council also encourages the Commonwealth to ensure that any nonprofit organizations who are grantees be extended administrative allowances to build this into future grant requests to ensure individuals who work in the philanthropic sector (who oftentimes are women, and modest income women) are not left out.

- **Salary History Ban**

- We are all well aware that a gender wage gap⁵ continues to exist in our nation. Women working full-time earn on average \$0.82 for every \$1 earned by their male counterparts. Further, women of color endure a wider gap - with AAPI women earning \$0.85 on the dollar, Black Women earning \$0.63 on the dollar, Indigenous women earning \$0.60 on the dollar, and Latina's earning \$0.55 on the dollar. This wage gap allows salary histories to continue to perpetuate inequality and ensure that women are not paid for the work they are completing but are compensated at universally lower rates simply due to bias and inequalities.

⁵ Bleiweis, R., 2021. *Why Salary History Bans Matter To Securing Equal Pay* - Center for American Progress. [online] Center for American Progress. Available at: <<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2021/03/24/497475/salary-history-bans-matter-securing-equal-pay/>> [Accessed 18 October 2021].

Currently, as of July 2021⁶, twenty-one (21) states have state-wide bans that prohibit employers from requesting salary history information from job applicants, and twenty-one (21) localities have such a ban. While the Governor did announce an equity ban for state agencies in 2019⁷, the Council on Women encourages the Governor along with our Secretary of Labor to work toward a statewide ban being considered in the 2022 January General Assembly

- **Healthcare Workforce Equity**

- Continue to create workforce opportunities for more individuals to become certified peer specialists (drawing inspiration from behavioral-health and substance-use programs) and/or Community Health Workers to increase the opportunities for women in the Commonwealth to access health and wellness support. The Council suggests a keen emphasis on advancing the pipeline for minority specialists and CHWs by partnering with all of Virginia's Colleges and Universities, including specific outreach and engagement with the Commonwealth's HBCUs and Community Colleges, to provide students increased opportunities to receive educational scholarships and direct links to workforce initiatives in not only urban localities but our rural communities.

- **Support of General Assembly Bills**

- The Council on Women wishes to state its support for Senator Jennifer Boysko's bills focused on the Virginia Equal Pay Act (SB 1228 in 2021 Session⁸) as well as her bill focused on establishing a paid family and medical leave program (SB 1330 in 2021 Session⁹). Both of these bills provide integral services to the women and girls of the Commonwealth by ensuring that equal work garners equal pay and that all citizens have access to paid leave to ensure they remain healthy and have

⁶ HR Dive. 2021. *Salary History: A running list of states and localities that have outlawed pay history questions*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.hrdive.com/news/salary-history-ban-states-list/516662/>> [Accessed 18 October 2021].

⁷ Yarmosky, A., 2021. *Governor Northam Announces Employment Equity Initiative for State Agencies*. [online] Governor.virginia.gov. Available at:

<<https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/all-releases/2019/june/headline-841165-en.html>> [Accessed 18 October 2021].

⁸ Boysko, J., 2021. *SB 1228 Virginia Equal Pay Act; civil penalties*. [online] Lis.virginia.gov. Available at: <<https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?211+sum+SB1228>> [Accessed 18 October 2021].

⁹ Boysko, J., 2021. *SB 1330 Paid family and medical leave program; Virginia Employment Commission to establish..* [online] Lis.virginia.gov. Available at: <<https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?211+sum+SB1330>> [Accessed 18 October 2021].

the opportunity to give care to loved ones without losing their jobs or defaulting on bills.

The VCW recommends the following actions that are under the purview for the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia:

Gender Equity

- Laws and policies that are on their face unrelated to health can have surprising impacts on marginalized populations and women. In recognition of the interconnectedness of these public policies, the Commonwealth of Virginia should develop a commission to undertake a gender equity review of laws and policies in order to make recommendations for key changes the legislature and Governor's administration can take to level the playing field. This could be modeled after the Governor's Commission to Examine Racial Inequity in Virginia Law¹⁰, and examine laws and policies that appear gender-neutral, but have the impact of enabling inequities for women and womxn in Virginia.
- The Council on Women would further request that incoming Governor Glenn Younkin provide further tasks and charges for the Council on Women to focus on and approach our work in support and assistance to the Younkin administration. This could include ways that the Administration could leverage the Council on Women within our focus on issues of equity for the adults and children who identify as woman Commonwealth such as access to quality healthcare, access to living wage employment, ability to enter higher education if desired, and the opportunities to ensure that their families have equal access to needed opportunities so that they may not simply survive in the Commonwealth but that they may thrive here.

¹⁰ Governor Northam Commits to Repealing Racially Discriminatory Language in Virginia Law, Accessed October 19, 2020 from <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/all-releases/2019/december/headline-849698-en.html>