

2017-2018 Women's Caucus Accomplishments

Legislative Priorities

- 1. H.1110: An Act establishing regional commissions on the status of women and girls**
Rep. Betty Poirier/Rep. Christine Barber and Sen. Mike Brady/Sen. Vinny deMacedo
This bill would establish three new regional commissions on the status of women and girls: an Eastern Regional Commission, an Upper Middlesex Commission and a Plymouth County Commission. The passage of this bill would ensure every municipality in the Commonwealth is included in a regional commission on the status of women.
SIGNED INTO LAW ON MARCH 15, 2018!
- 2. S.2093: An Act establishing the Massachusetts Pregnant Workers Fairness Act**
Sen. Joan Lovely/Rep. Dave Rogers
This law protects women from discrimination in the workplace due to pregnancy by prohibiting employers from choosing not to hire or from firing a worker from her job based on pregnancy. It also requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations for workers who are pregnant without repercussions to the pregnant worker. It also prohibits an employer from requiring an employee to take paid or unpaid leave because of pregnancy.
SIGNED INTO LAW ON JULY 27, 2017!
- 3. H.4009: An Act advancing contraception coverage and economic security in our state (ACCESS)**
Rep. Patricia Haddad/Rep. John Scibak/Sen. Harriette Chandler
This bill protects and expands access to contraceptives by requiring insurers in Massachusetts to cover all FDA-approved contraceptive methods without cost-sharing, including coverage of over-the-counter contraceptives without a prescription. This first in the nation law will safeguard the 1.4 million Massachusetts women who currently have access to no-copay birth control. Additionally, this bill creates equity in contraceptive coverage by eliminating cost-sharing for contraception and allows women to pick up a 12-month supply of birth control after an initial three-month prescription.
SIGNED INTO LAW ON NOVEMBER 20, 2017!
- 4. July 1, 2018: most comprehensive pay equity legislation in the United States went into effect after successful advocacy by the Women's Caucus in the 2015-2016 legislative session. It was the first legislative priority adopted by the Caucus in over 10 years and was passed unanimously in the House and Senate.**

Other Legislation

1. Criminal Justice Reform Legislation
 - a. Establishes statewide sexual assault/rape kit tracking system
 - b. Prohibits pregnant women being put in solitary confinement
 - c. Directs more fines and fees to the Human Trafficking Trust Fund

2. PATCH Act
 - a. Allows patients to choose their preferred method of receiving explanation of benefits (EOB), including at an alternate address or through HIPAA-compliant electronic means
 - b. Requires that EOBs provide generic information only rather than giving more detailed information that could be used against a patient
 - c. Ensures patients are informed of their options to request confidential means of receiving EOBs
 - d. Why? Sensitive health information is often listed on EOBs which violates the right to privacy for anyone enrolled as a dependent on another's policy

3. Paid Family Leave
 - a. 12 paid weeks off for those who need to care for a seriously ill family member and new parents who need time away from work to bond with a child (birth, adoption or foster care placement)
 - b. 20 paid weeks off for those recovering from own significant illness or injury
 - c. Receive up to 80% of the state's average weekly wage

4. NASTY Women
 - a. Repeals unconstitutional laws that impose criminal penalties for abortion and contraception in Massachusetts
 - b. Protects women's rights in Massachusetts with the uncertainty at the federal level

Significant Events

1. Human Trafficking Awareness Day – established in 2017 and created annual event to bring stories of victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation to the State House

2. Denim Day – establish in 2017 and created annual event with Lt. Governor and the Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence
 - c. Consistent growth in attendance
 - d. State-wide partnerships for participation

5. Domestic Violence as a Public Health Issue – Informational Hearing
 - a. Partnered with Chairwoman Kate Hogan, Public Health, to hear from a variety of stakeholders about why we must treat domestic violence as a public health issue – not a public safety or personal issue

6. Philanthropic Initiatives
 - a. Collected over 2500 items for female veterans as part of Operation Stand Down
 - b. Distributed over 600 backpacks to children in need throughout the state in partnership with the National Foundation for Women Legislators (NFWL)

Other Accomplishments

1. Established Sexual Assault Working Group
 - a. Work with over 40 partners in the State House, Administration and outside organizations to discuss issues related to sexual assault and policy solutions
 - b. Developed relationships with new individuals
2. Established Preterm Birth Prevention Committee
 - a. Working with March of Dimes to host series of meetings in the State House to discuss premature birth in Massachusetts, the impacts it has on families and insurance and policy solutions
3. Established relationship with WorldBoston International Visitor Leadership Program
 - a. Groups of professionals around the world traveling with the US State Department are welcomed into the State House to learn about the work of the Women's Caucus, understand how state government works and provide an exchange of ideas
4. Hosted international professionals for full-time fellowships
 - a. 2 fellows from Ukraine: October 2016 and October 2017
 - b. Fellows from Jordan and Israel: May 2018
5. Justice Involved Women Task Force
 - a. Worked with Dept. of Correction to establish an annual "Mom and Me" camp at MCI-Framingham each summer for children to visit with their mothers
 - b. Collected donations (toys and books) for the visiting room at MCI-Framingham