

Voices of Maryland Women Listening Tour
St. Mary's County
Chesapeake Building
41770 Baldrige Street, Leonardtown, Maryland
Commissioners Meeting Room
September 28, 2017 ♦ 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

The Voices of Maryland Women Listening Tour traveled to the bottom of Maryland's southern peninsula on a warm autumn evening to beautiful St. Mary's County, a jurisdiction with a population of about 113,000. There, fifty-three individuals gathered to discuss the concerns of women in this community. The public forum was organized as a partnership between the Commissions for Women of St. Mary's County and the state of Maryland.

The attendees at the forum included individuals, representatives of women's and community advocacy organizations and service providers, including Mr. Tom Jarboe, member of the Commissioners of St. Mary's County. They articulately identified a wide range of issues and challenges for the women of St. Mary's County, selected five they thought were most important, and discussed possible remedies.

The evening began with welcoming remarks by Norma Pipkin, Chair of the St. Mary's County Commission for Women, followed by greetings from James R. Guy, President of the Commissioners of St. Mary's County. It quickly became an open forum on the challenges facing women in this southern Maryland region.

The participants listed a total of 25 challenges facing the women of St. Mary's County. Each participant was given five "votes" to place beside the issues she or he considered most important. From that process, five were selected as the top priorities.

The group then identified actions that could be taken to address each of the "top five" issues:

1. Domestic Violence
 - a. Develop more safe shelters for victims and their families
 - b. Establish a Family Justice Center
 - c. Effectively enforce restraining orders
 - d. Provide training for judges
 - e. Put the domestic violence cases first on the docket or provide a special court room for these cases so victims are afforded some measure of privacy
 - f. Study best practices from other jurisdictions and adopt those that would work here in St. Mary's County

2. Need for better public transportation
 - a. Establish permanent, identified bus stops with shelters and lights
 - b. Increase the number of bus routes
 - c. Extend the hours of operation of buses into the evening and early morning
 - d. Add more buses to the routes

3. Lack of affordable child care
 - a. Expand child care provider hours to include evenings and weekends
 - b. Encourage and make available licensure training to increase the number of family care providers
 - c. Establish a network among child care providers to facilitate support and exchange of ideas and services
 - d. Provide incentives for employers to provide child care benefits
 - e. Encourage the establishment of child care for sick children
 - f. Increase the number of child care subsidies available
4. Too few women in elected and appointed office
 - a. Provide training for women in political engagement
 - b. All committees that address women's issues should include women among their members
5. Elder care: expensive and complicated
 - a. Develop programs that help individuals and families recognize the need to plan and prepare for aging
 - b. Establish support groups for family and friends dealing with elder care
 - c. Distribute information about elder abuse and protection directly to the elder adult as well as to the caretakers
 - d. Make assisted living accessible and affordable for low income adults

The chart on the next page lists all the issues identified during the course of the public forum and shows the number of votes each one received from those in attendance as they considered the priority level of each issue in comparison to the others.

Number of Votes	Issue
24	Domestic Violence
21	Need for better public transportation
19	Lack of affordable child care
19	Too few women in elected and appointed office
18	Elder care: too expensive and complicated
13	Need for a living wage requirement
11	Need for economic development that brings more jobs with living wage and benefits
8	Need for affordable, accessible health care
7	Need for greater awareness of existing services
5	Insufficient resources to help youth prepare for life after high school, especially for those from families of limited income
4	Need to educate youth on healthy, respectful relationships
3	Need for more services for the homeless, including those with children
3	Age discrimination in the workplace
3	Need to increase funding for adult protective and support services
3	Special needs of single parent families
3	Need for support services for new mothers
2	Need for more mental health service providers for women
2	Too little investment in education, including teachers and staff salaries
2	Need for access to Internet and technology, and the equipment to use it, especially in rural areas
1	Opioid addictions especially among youth
1	Human trafficking
0	Need for more job search support services
0	Water quality
0	Need for more support for women starting their own businesses
0	Need access to reproductive health care
172	25 Total Issues

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St. Mary's County: Voices of Maryland Women

Photo Album







