

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The 2017/18 Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, led by Chair Megan Doherty and Vice Chair Andrea Jones, embarked on a new iteration of the advisory board. Building off work from last year, the commission put new policies and structure in place to improve its stability and usefulness by focusing committee attention on key policy areas that impact women and girls in Tallahassee-Leon County. The new structure allows the CSWG to make better use of the voluminous research done by previous commissions to produce actionable recommendations, respond to emerging issues, and proactively contribute to dynamic, inclusive policies by lawmakers.

The committees—Health and Development, STEM and Economic Security, Violence and Safety—have carried out the mission of the commission through community outreach, partnership and resource development, as well as data collection and analysis. The work of this year’s commission addressed timely issues on both the local and national stage, including sexual violence and economic opportunity for women. Additionally, the Organization and Bylaws is developing a strategic plan to guide future efforts of the CSWG, designed to establish continuity and improve impact.

The annual report details work of the committees in the critical policy areas as well as work by the commission as a whole toward the longevity and value of the advisory board in addressing pressing needs of the community through support of its elected officials. The CSWG seeks to celebrate the best practices that exist in our local government, education, and business sectors; facilitate collaboration among key partners; and draw attention to potential solutions for the extant issues in Tallahassee-Leon County that are exhibiting success in other communities. By doing so, the CSWG expects enhance the efforts of local officials that improve quality of life for the women and girls who live here.

## Strategic Plan Update

Extending from the Strategic Review begun in 2016/17, the commission has begun the development of a multi-year strategic plan to guide the work of the CSWG, improving continuity between commission

years, enabling the measurement of impact, and supporting responsiveness and usefulness to the City and County Commissions.

The original strategic review team included CSWG leadership, a City of Tallahassee commissioner and a Leon County commissioner, and a representative of the Oasis Center for Women & Girls. Taking the steps outlined by the review team, the CSWG has assessed staffing needs, formalized communication processes, and restructured the commission to focus attention more effectively on multiple policy areas. The incoming CSWG leadership has been a part of the process in 2017/18 and will continue the work to finalize the strategic plan.

## Committee Structure Update

New for the 2017/18 commission year is a reorganization of the standing committee structure to reflect the critical policy areas identified through the work of previous commissions. The change was made to better organize and focus the work of the commission on these key areas. The three issue-oriented standing committees are: Health and Development, STEM and Economic Security, and Violence and Safety. A fourth standing committee, Organization and Bylaws, is formed of the committee chairs and headed by the vice chair of the commission. Each committee meets a minimum of monthly, with the full commission meeting on a monthly basis as well.



CSWG Vice Chair Andrea Jones speaking at the opening retreat held in October 2017 at the FSU Center for Leadership and Social Change.

## Committee Activities

CSWG committees set action plans at the start of the commission year to address the assigned policy areas, and pursued these goals through various activities.

### Health and Development

The Health and Development committee initiated work on a health report card specific to women and girls to create a baseline for future assessment of progress and need. The committee found that, in many instances, data reporting that is generalized to the whole of Leon County serves to hide critical issues in some of our communities. The committee also noted that the County's award-winning GIS department might be a valuable resource in creating useful mapping tools to allow for more in-depth examination of stress factors, which is needed to reveal actionable solutions for these smaller areas. These include rates of sexually-transmitted infections, maternal and infant health, nutrition, and mental health indicators. The mental health of women in Tallahassee-Leon County is in decline. The committee will focus further efforts on this topic next year.

### STEM and Economic Security

The STEM and Economic Security committee produced a collection tool to populate a database of women speakers. The online speaker's bureau will raise awareness of the broad expertise that exists

among women locally and provide a way to access them as a resource. The tool is live on the CSWG website. The committee also hosted a public hearing on women's economic security to gather data from the public in advance of the 2019 summit they are planning to highlight critical partnerships and opportunities for advancing women's economic security in Tallahassee-Leon County. More than half of the women surveyed by the committee are not in a financial position to prepare for retirement, and the cost of housing and childcare are significant factors in monthly expenses that exceed suggested levels.

### Violence and Safety

The Violence and Safety committee convened a public conversation on sexual violence in concert with the international #MeToo movement. "#MeToo: A Community Conversation with the CSWG" brought together community members and service providers to discuss needs and services related to sexual violence prevention and response. Speakers representing services for veterans, students, and survivors of domestic violence attended. In conjunction with the community conversation, the committee created a survey that collected data on experiences of sexual violence in the past year. Over 100 surveys were collected, and will continue. So far, the data shows experiences of sexual violence across the socio-economic spectrum with multiple instances of victimization and most frequently in parks or public spaces.

## CSWG Recommendations

- ◆ Disaggregate and map data layers as a standard practice to identify stress factors in neighborhoods. More localized data will help to show specific areas of need and potential for collaborative solutions.
- ◆ Increase public awareness of and youth education for sexually-transmitted infections, including how transmission occurs, with risk and prevention factors. This represents an urgent need.
- ◆ Extend financial education to girls starting in middle school to establish healthy financial habits early, and for women age 35-50 regarding retirement savings and investment options.
- ◆ Examine potential strategies for employers to assist the workforce with childcare and educational opportunities to improve women's economic security.
- ◆ Initiate collaboration between the CSWG and the group conducting the CSC needs assessment.
- ◆ Establish partnerships to collect representative sample data on sexual violence to determine actionable prevention options.
- ◆ Train municipal employees (utilities, parks) to recognize and report signs of human trafficking.