



STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN WOMEN'S COMMISSION
DETROIT

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

CHERYL BERGMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

January 17, 2020

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer
Governor, State of Michigan
State Capitol
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Governor Whitmer,

Pursuant to Public Act 1 of 1968, we are pleased to submit to you the 2019 Annual Report of the Michigan Women's Commission for the calendar year of January 1 – December 31, 2019.

Our initiatives were operationalized as follows:

Initiative to partner with statewide organizations such as the Michigan Council of Women in Technology, Inforum, and various chambers of commerce to address the gaps in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) for young and professional women, women on boards, leadership and entrepreneurial challenges for women.

The Women in Business committee divided into two subcommittees, STEM and Women on Boards/C-Suites, to better focus on the initiatives set for in each area.

The Women on Boards/C-Suites subcommittee defined goals and initiatives for the year with a focus on increasing the number of Michigan women considered for corporate boards and executive level positions. In May, the committee recognized 25 Michigan companies that have 20% or more women on corporate boards with a letter of recognition. The committee also sent over 30 letters to companies that fall below the 20% threshold, encouraging them to add women to their boards with their next vacancies.

The STEM subcommittee defined goals and initiatives for the year with a focus on increasing the number of Michigan girls engaged in STEM learning in early childhood. In the spring, STEM bookmarks were released with a goal of increasing awareness for different age groups. The bookmarks cover 0-12 months, 1-2 years, 3-4 years and 5-6 year groups and include activity suggestions and tips on how to encourage STEM learning.

In April, the Michigan Women's Commission showed support for girls in STEM at the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) Robotics Competition at Cobo Hall in Detroit. With thousands of attendees from around the world, the Michigan Women's Commission reached over 30,000 people at this event.

Millennial Advisory Committee

In December 2018, the Michigan Women's Commission interviewed and selected applicants for the Millennial Advisory Committee, an advisory body to the commission. The goal of the millennial advisory committee is to identify issues of concern, create solutions and implement plans surrounding issues that impact Michigan's young and future female leaders. At our May meeting, the Millennial Advisory Committee narrowed their focus to women's healthcare from a patient perspective to empower women to advocate for themselves in medical care. The committee's sub focus is on obesity and infant mortality in urban areas as well as maternal health care.

Initiative to Raise Awareness of Human Trafficking and Sexual Assault in Michigan through collaborative initiatives with numerous partners:

Commissioner Cathy Knauf with the Southwest Human Trafficking Task Force made tremendous community outreach this year to raise awareness on human trafficking and sexual assault. The task force is planning to do an e-memorial in Berrien county which would have a symbol to denote a victim of sex trafficking, labor trafficking or both and would list the victim's name (if provided) as well as the date of their death. It would be a place to pay respects and a way to collect data across the United States. The memorial would resemble a waterfall and the person's name and date of death would be projected on the water.

Several events have been held across the state including Planting Hope, Blue Up the Town for human trafficking awareness month and Kidstrong, a unique and fun non-competitive outdoor obstacle course for kids to raise awareness and remind kids and parents of the dangers of predators lurking on social media, games and other electronic platforms.

The Southwest Michigan Human Trafficking Task Force awarded their first scholarship for \$500 to an incoming freshman attending Grand Valley State University who completed a senior service project that brought awareness to middle school students about human trafficking.

Commissioner Knauf also participated in a podcast titled "Mighty Parenting Podcast #75 – Human Trafficking Happens Everywhere – Protect Your Teenager" in August to share the truths and myths of human trafficking.

The task force is currently working towards a resolution for regulations on illicit massage parlors throughout the state.

Initiative to identify the needs of Michigan women veterans through a Michigan-specific survey to help advocacy efforts and support efforts using social media:

The Women Veterans Subcommittee is identifying the needs of Michigan women veterans by utilizing social media to help identify and become a resource for veterans. The Michigan Women Veterans Forum Facebook, started in 2017, has grown to over 200 women veteran members and is working towards the goal of building comradery among our state's women veterans.

In June, the Michigan Women's Commission and the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) partnered together for the inaugural Women Veterans 5k Run/Walk to support Women Veterans Recognition Month. The run took participants along the Lansing Rivertrail in Downtown Lansing, alongside the Grand River. The event raised thousands of dollars and was attended by MVAA Director Zaneta Adams and U.S. Representative Elissa Slotkin. There were 135 participants

and hundreds of supporters in attendance. The event also garnered media coverage on television and radio. The Women Veterans Expo, held in conjunction with the run/walk, showcased several businesses that support women veterans in Michigan. All proceeds from this run/walk were given to three organizations that support Michigan women veterans – Moxie Wild, WINC – For All Women Veterans and Michigan Women Veterans Empowerment (MWVE). The checks were presented to representatives from all three organizations at our August meeting.

Conversations on Gender Equity

The MWC held Conversations on Gender Equity in order to stimulate and encourage throughout the state study and review of the status of women in this state. Conversations were held in Genesee, Kent, and Washtenaw Counties. The outcomes of the conversations will help inform Governor Whitmer's agenda and the work of the MWC.

Meetings:

We held four quarterly meetings of the Michigan Women's Commission:

- 1) January 23 in Lansing where subcommittees focused on initiatives and goals. The women's commission also held a Women Legislator Reception after our public meeting to recognize new women legislators and educate attendees on the role of the women's commission. Several state department directors and legislators attended the event.
- 2) May 7 in Holland where the commission heard from Melissa Roessing, Director of Food Security & Stabilization with Community Action House, Nicole Hamberg from the Holland Police Department and Beth Larsen, Executive Director of Resilience: Advocates for Ending Violence. Roessing shared background on Community Action House and how they provide a kitchen, food pantry and monthly distribution to those in need. Hamberg discussed how domestic violence is the number one issue women experience in Holland when police are contacted. Larsen shared how her organization provides a 24-hour emergency response shelter to Allegan county.
- 3) August 6 in Detroit where Angela Povilaitis, staff attorney from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), spoke to the commission about her history as a prosecutor focused on child-related cases as well as her role as lead prosecutor on the Larry Nassar case. She shared how MDHHS implemented MiVan (Michigan Victim Advocacy Network), the Safe Response program and a statewide Sexual Assault hotline. The commission also heard from Jill Matthews of WINC – For All Women Veterans and Sargent Stephanie Shannon from MWVE, recipients of the proceeds from the Women Veterans 5K Run/Walk.
- 4) November 12 in Lansing where commissioners heard from Governor Gretchen Whitmer, who shared her support for the women's commission, its initiatives and what she has done in her tenure as governor to help women in our state.

Other Activities:

Cheryl Bergman was appointed as executive director of the women's commission in September and replaced Mary Engelman.

Shannon Garrett was hired as chief strategy officer and replaced Jaclyn Debusschere, who was formerly the department specialist for the women's commission.

As has been the practice of the Michigan Women's Commission to report all out-of-state travel, Commissioners Cathy Knauf and Alisha Meneely traveled to the JuST Conference on Human Trafficking from October 15-17, 2019 in Cincinnati, Ohio. The JuST Conference series, a sequence of events hosted by Shared Hope International, sheds light on juvenile sex trafficking.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Bergman
Executive Director
Michigan Women's Commission