



## **Maine Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (MePCSW)**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**February 10, 2025**

**12:00-2:00 P.M.**

**MePCSW Commission Members in Attendance:** Anne Gass, Rebecca Austin, Darylen Cote, Sue Mackey Andrews, Dania Bowie, Jill Barkley Roy, Fatuma Hussein, Eisha Khan, Jennifer Wilkey, Kate Elmes, Kate Easter, Chris Hastedt, Julie Mallett, Eva White

**MePCSW Commission Members Absent:** Maulian Bryant, Keita Whitten Foster, Ellen McKenzie, Samantha Lott Hale, Karen Keim

#### **Staff and Guests:**

- Elinor Higgins, MePCSW Executive Director
- Kate McBrien, Chief Deputy Secretary of State and Chief of Staff
- Dr. Lelia De Andrade, Deputy Secretary of State for Community Relations (Guest facilitator for strategic planning conversation)

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#### **Facilitators:**

Anne Gass, MePCSW Chair

Dr. Lelia De Andrade, Deputy Secretary of State for Community Relations

#### **Welcome and Introductions**

1. Welcomed new Commission members and complete introductions

#### **Old Business and Public Comment**

1. Approve October meeting minutes
  - a. Motion to approve: Darylen
  - b. Second: Sue
  - c. Vote: Unanimous approval
2. Approve December meeting minutes
  - a. Motion to approve: Darylen
  - b. Second: Rebecca
  - c. Vote: Unanimous approval
3. Any members of the public may introduce themselves and speak for 3 minutes
  - a. No members of the public in attendance

### Legislative and Budget Update

1. Kate McBrien, Chief Deputy Secretary of State and Chief of Staff provided an **update on Gov. Mills' proposed budget**, which included a \$5,000 line for MePCSW. Discussed next steps, including opportunities to add fiscal notes to bills below.
2. Elinor provided brief update on bills below:
  - a. **LR 2267**: Resolve, Directing the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women to Study the Extent of Workforce Gender Segregation in the State
  - b. **LD 135**: An Act to Provide Compensation to Members of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women to Enhance Equitable Commission Participation from Across the State
    - i. 2/10/25 public hearing – went well, SLG Committee asked thoughtful questions and President Daughtry presented the bill. Elinor and Secretary Bellows provided joint testimony in favor.
3. **Discussion about opportunity to engage with and support the ERA for All Coalition**
  - a. Vote was proposed in favor of supporting the initiative, with additional discussion and detail to come.
    - i. Darylen moved to support, Sue seconded.
    - ii. Discussion: question of the partisan nature of the bill, and the Commission's willing are we to take that on. Discussed previous Commission votes on whether to support past Maine ERA efforts. Began to discuss the broader issue of how the Commission should/could engage on partisan topics.
    - iii. Vote – unanimous in favor of supporting the ERA for All Coalition's initiative, with further discussion needed on what it means to support.
      1. Proposal to give testimony either in favor of or neither for nor against [LD 260](#) - RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish That All Maine Residents Have Equal Rights Under the Law

### New Business – Strategic Planning

1. Introduced facilitator – Dr. De Andrade
2. Reviewed purpose of the discussion – identifying internal and external goals for Commission work over the next 5 years
3. Discussed of process approach and outputs of meeting, and the aim of the strategic planning process: to create a simple, usable strategic plan that helps with decision-making and targeting Commission resources.
4. Review and discussion of statute: Chapter 371-A: PERMANENT COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
  - a. Discussed the powers and duties of the MePCSW outlined in statute and the ones most relevant to the work. Highlighted the importance of MePCSW's role as a resource for the governor and legislature.
5. Reviewed and discussed MePCSW survey responses about the challenges and opportunities facing Maine women and the Commission
  - a. Vision of Commission
    - i. Highlighted the top five issue areas that MePCSW members are interested in (health care coverage, access, and navigation, reproductive rights and care, economic security across the lifespan,

child care quality, access, and affordability, and supporting the care workforce).

- ii. Discussion highlighted concerns about over-reliance on the Dept. of SOS, as well as concerns about the perspectives we might be missing

6. Discussion about draft strategic goals

- a. Interest in identifying and learning about varied points of view (perhaps through listening sessions in different parts of the state and different communities).
- b. Interest in increasing awareness of MePCSW work through partnerships and cohesive publicity strategies.
- c. Need to grow credibility and create communication pathways with lawmakers where we genuinely reflect the voices of Maine women without picking and choosing the information we share.
- d. Meet people where they are for listening sessions
- e. Identify the group's skills and strengths and what is missing in order to fill gaps in perspective more effectively
- f. Interest in creating a partner/stakeholder map
- g. Interest in further engagement between MePCSW members and lawmakers
- h. Focus on strategies to track and report MePCSW impact and activities and think strategically about partnerships, including with state agencies
- i. Develop core principles and topics where the Commission is focusing work and building expertise.
- j. One goal could be identifying MePCSW's role in the Maine landscape. Suggestion to align goals with governor and legislature, while identifying one goal from MePCSW members.
- k. Interest in organizing data and reporting by legislative districts or counties
- l. Discussion around how to position the Commission as a trusted, credible entity in a partisan landscape.

7. Plus Delta – discussion of what worked and what could be changed for future discussion

- a. Suggestion of taking a round robin approach to answering some questions
- b. Interest in more detailed prompts so members can prepare in advance
- c. Acknowledgement of different kinds of participation from different members/personalities

8. Next steps

- a. Elinor will draft goals based on discussion and share for review
- b. Second survey will go out in March

**Parking lot from discussion:**

- Put together a panel about the history of the women's Commission, find out more about the reason why the Commission was brought back during the 125<sup>th</sup> legislative session
- Considering models from other states, including regional Commissions