



Maine Permanent Commission on **THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

Maine Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (MePCSW)

Meeting Minutes

April 13th, 2026

12:00 – 1:30 P.M.

MePCSW Members in Attendance: Samantha Lott Hale, Sue Mackey Andrews, Chris Hastedt, Maulian Bryant, Jennifer Wilkey, Anne Gass, Rebecca Austin, Keita Whitten Foster, Darylen Cote, Eva White, Jill Barkley Roy

MePCSW Members Absent: Fatuma Hussein, Eisha Khan, Dania Bowie, Khadija El Barkaoui, Julie Mallett, Kate Easter

Staff and Guests: Nancy Bremeau (NACW Board), Reggie Parson (MDOL) Elinor Higgins (MePCSW ED)

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Facilitator: Samantha Lott Hale, MePCSW Chair

Old Business and Public Comment

1. Welcome
2. Review, discuss, and approve February meeting minutes
 - a. Motion to approve: Keita
 - b. Second: Sue
 - c. Vote: Unanimous vote to approve
3. Any members of the public may introduce themselves and speak for 3 minutes
 - a. No members of the public present other than guest speakers

New Business

1. Guest Speaker: National Association of Commissions on Women (NACW)
 - a. Nancy Bremeau – NACW Board
 - i. Overview of NACW board, explaining that it supports approximately 200 commissions across the country.
 - ii. Highlighted NACW's mission to share resources and facilitate networking among commissions, noting that while paid membership provides voting rights in board elections, all commissions are welcome to attend virtual events and join newsletters.
 - iii. Next NACW annual meeting will be held in 2027, possibly in New Hampshire, and monthly virtual open forums are being planned for the near future.

- iv. Shared insights on policy advocacy and the role of commissions in engaging with state legislatures. Described California's process of reviewing and supporting priority bills, including those on reproductive rights, gender-based violence, and homelessness.
 - v. Discussed public hearings held by county commission in California to identify community needs and gaps in services
- 2. Guest Speaker: Maine Department of Labor, Paid Family and Medical Leave
 - a. Reginald Parson, Deputy Director, Maine Paid Family and Medical Leave Program
 - i. Presented overview of Maine's newly launched Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) program, which has been three years in development. Explained eligibility, earnings requirements, and application process through Aflac.
 - ii. Questions included clarifications of public and private plans, as well as the availability of an alternate base period for calculating wages, similar to unemployment insurance.
- 3. Annual review MePCSW policies and practices
 - a. Elinor presented an annual review of MePCSW policies and practices highlighting the commission's history, structure, and current initiatives. Outlined key expectations for commissioners, including attending meetings, participating in committees, and representing the commission. Shared news training requirements for board and commission members related to the Freedom of Access Act – will share this information when it becomes available.
- 4. Updates and upcoming activities
 - a. Legislative and Budget Update
 - i. Supplemental budget creates a budget line for the MePCSW and also included funding for reproductive care, victim services, and child care affordability programs.
 - ii. LD 522, directing MePCSW to study gender segregation amongst Maine's workforce, was picked up off the appropriations table and is headed to the Governor's desk
 - 1. Discussed possible approaches to the study – including public hearings, highlighting state data, and leveraging work by Commissioner Anne Gass around workplace discrimination stories
 - b. MePCSW Webinar – May 14th 10-11am
 - i. Discussed plans for an upcoming webinar aimed at promoting the commission's work and gathering input from stakeholders.
 - c. Highlighted progress toward data dashboard and the five pillars and indicators. Next step, Elinor to share specific data metrics for the Education and Opportunity pillar with MePCSW.
 - d. June in-person meeting – June 8th
 - i. Previewed plans for a meeting on June 8th in Augusta from 9:00 AM - 2:30 PM at Viles Arboretum

ii. Draft agenda and more details to follow

5. Outreach to community partners and legislators

- a. Shared materials for outreach and webinar promotion with Commissioners and left time for questions and for an active start to email outreach.