



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

Maine Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (MePCSW)

Meeting Minutes

August 11, 2025

12:00 – 1:30 P.M.

MePCSW Members in Attendance: Dania Bowie, Maulian Bryant, Kate Elmes, Jill Barkley Roy, Karen Keim, Sue Mackey Andrews, Darylen Cote, Kate Easter, Samantha Lott Hale, Eisha Khan, Rebecca Austin, Eva White, Fatuma Hussein

MePCSW Members Absent: Chris Hastedt, Keita Whitten Foster, Julie Mallett, Jennifer Wilkey, Anne Gass

Staff and Guests: Elinor Higgins (MePCSW ED)

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Facilitators: Samantha Lott Hale, MePCSW Chair

Old Business and Public Comment

1. Reviewed and approved April and June meeting minutes
 - a. Motion to approve: Darylen
 - b. Second: Sue
 - c. Unanimous vote to approve
2. Debriefed the June in-person meeting
 - a. Elinor shared feedback from meeting evaluations:
 - i. Positive themes: meaningful participation and excitement about the meeting location and guest presenters
 - ii. Constructive feedback: Need better food labeling and additional rooms for privacy.
 - b. Recommendation from several Commissioners to keep meeting in June but consider earlier dates for future in-person gatherings while school is still in session and to avoid end of month grant deadlines
3. No members of the public present

Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) – Overview and MePCSW Publication

1. Elinor provided an overview of the Maine PRAMS program and read from the statement provided by Maine PRAMS Coordinator Emily Gerety, Maine Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
2. Reviewed content, policy recommendations, and wider context of the draft MePCSW issue brief about PRAMS

- a. Discussion about how to use the voice of MePCSW, concerns about picking and choosing specific topics when there are so many important competing needs
 - i. Conversation about how much Commission capacity to use on evaluating decision making amid competing priorities. Balancing the need for accountability and some tracking of how MePCSW makes decisions with ensuring that capacity and collective voice is used to highlight the most pressing needs for Maine women
 - ii. Reflection on how the landscape of federal funding cuts creates a situation with some parallels to COVID-19 that shines a spotlight on systemic shortcomings and inequities. Need to ensure that the work of the Commission reflects the full spectrum of women, and not just white women.
 - iii. Interest in prioritizing access to resources.
- b. Two Commissioners shared specific uses of PRAMS in their work and expressed concerns about it going away
- c. MePCSW approved the publication of the PRAMS issue brief with the addition of a statement about how MePCSW does not prioritize one important program or service over another and does not endorse cuts to other important services for women and girls

New Business – Committee Updates

1. Research and Reporting Committee (RRC) report out by Chair Eisha Khan
 - a. Overview of plans for the 2026 report and an accompanying data dashboard
 - b. Developing different structures for engaging advisors on this work and identifying criteria for how to select subject matter experts
2. Policy and Legislation Committee (PLC) report out by Chair Dania Bowie
 - a. Shared plans for outreach and engagement with legislators and strategies for engaging with the Governor's office around key priorities
 - b. At the first meeting, Maine Women's Lobby ED, Destie Hohman Sprague presented on the status of priority bills after the first session
3. Community Outreach Committee (COC) report out by Co-Chair Fatuma Hussein with input from Co-Chair Sue Mackey Andrews
 - a. Discussed the importance of the COC as a foundation for the Commission's other work
 - b. Will be focused on building out a vision and guiding principles for the COC and developing a regional approach to community engagement and creating a foundation for the commission's statewide presence

MePCSW Member Sharing and Other Business

1. Updates from Commissioners?
 - a. Members shared about the impact of ICE raids on families in Maine, including highlighting the significant drop in client attendance at General Assistance offices due to families staying home or potentially self-deporting

- i. Fatuma will bring some data on this issue to the next meeting and is working with colleagues to develop a hotline for reporting incidents
- b. A new standing agenda item will be added to future agendas for discussing emerging needs so that Commissioners can be informed and have the opportunity to individually advocate on critical issues through outreach to representatives or writing op-eds.
- c. There was a request to limit the number of reply-all responses to Commission emails to decrease email volume