

MOVING TOWARD GENDER EQUITY

COLUMBUS
WOMEN'S COMMISSION
2020 REPORT



A MESSAGE FROM FIRST LADY SHANNON GINTHER

As the Columbus Women's Commission begins its fourth year of working to advance the economic security of women in our community, we are committed to lifting up women and their stories. We strive to create a more equitable city for women in all aspects of their lives.

Our dedication to broadening awareness and initiating policy change in the key areas of gender equity in the workplace, housing and evictions, workforce development and health will level the playing field so all women and their families in our community can thrive.

Women's stories inform us about challenges and barriers blocking their path to economic stability. Data and evidence-based strategies drive our work to confront the root causes of gender- and race-based inequities.

From the beginning, the Commission has convened conversations and developed partnerships with the City of Columbus, central Ohio employers, and local organizations to build on existing work in our community and to help identify where we can affect change for women in our community.

We seek practical solutions, such as relocating eviction hearing resources to the Franklin County Municipal Court building to make it easier to access these services. We recruit more women for careers in the skilled trades, which offer equity in the workplace and can support them toward economic security. Our efforts to provide medically accurate health education for central Ohio teens help decrease teen pregnancies and the cycle of poverty often accompanying it.

We have advanced our mission by advocating for gender equity policy changes at the local level, and strategies are now being implemented. The City of Columbus is leading by example with a paid family and caregiver leave policy and its minimum wage of \$15 per hour for all full-time employees.

Additionally, more than 250 local employers have signed The Columbus Commitment: Achieving Pay Equity pledge. This voluntary, employer-led initiative to close the gender wage gap and address workplace policies demonstrates our community's willingness to better understand gender- and race-based income inequities and address them within their own organizations. Their actions are positively impacting thousands of central Ohio employees.

Much work remains to achieve true gender equity in Columbus. With each collective step we take to address barriers, we build awareness and open the door to solutions and beneficial policy changes.

Our movement toward gender equity will make Columbus a stronger and more inclusive city for all its residents.



Shannon L. Ginther

A MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SHELLY BEITING

When we invest in and empower women, our community thrives. Guided by Mayor Ginther and First Lady Ginther's steadfast commitment to achieving gender equity for women in our city, the Columbus Women's Commission is beginning to move the needle.

Today, greater awareness exists of gender- and race-based inequities, and the unique challenges women face in equity in the workplace, housing and evictions, health and developing workforce skills to earn a living wage. Since the Commission's launch in 2017, we have built incredible partnerships with like organizations, local employers and policy makers to address these key areas.

We are making measurable progress toward economic security for women and families in Columbus. The Commission continues to study data to understand women's needs, and also listen to their experiences. This is critical to problem solving and advocating for change.

We know finances are the key stressor in many women's lives — especially in the 52,000 households in our community headed by single females stretching to meet basic expenses of shelter, food, utilities and child care. The poverty rate is more than six times higher for these households.

Efforts continue with our public and private partners to expand workforce development opportunities for women, including for survivors of human trafficking working to heal and rebuild their lives here.

Ohio ranks fourth in the U.S. in the number of human trafficking cases. Women are disproportionately affected by sex trafficking, representing four of five victims of reported cases. One in three are minors. The National Survivor Network reports that 90% of victims were arrested when trafficked. Their criminal records brought life-altering consequences, preventing 85% from gaining employment and nearly 56% from obtaining housing.

The Commission has heard victims' stories. We joined with 20 community partners to celebrate nearly 1,000 Columbus area survivors of human trafficking, sexual assault and domestic violence at a unique resiliency concert last summer featuring survivor and Grammy-nominated artist Janiva Magness.

Our focus on connecting women to workforce development opportunities will help build their path to economic security. The Commission is eager to identify more opportunities where we can impact advocacy and policy for gender equity in our community.

It is a genuine honor to serve the Columbus Women's Commission and to work alongside Mayor Ginther and First Lady Ginther, our devoted Commissioners and valued public and private partners, all committed to achieving economic self-sufficiency for women in our community.



Shelly R. Beiting

IMPROVING THE ECONOMIC SECURITY OF WOMEN AND FAMILIES IN COLUMBUS



Mayor Andrew J. Ginther and First Lady Shannon Ginther launched the Columbus Women's Commission in early 2017 with a definitive purpose: to dismantle barriers and reduce gender-based inequities to improve the economic position of all women in our community.

The Commission, chaired by the First Lady, believes all women deserve the opportunity to succeed. Appointed Commissioners represent a diverse, passionate group of women and men, with varied expertise and perspectives, to inspire change and action toward equity for women in Columbus in four key areas:

EQUITY IN THE
WORKPLACE

HOUSING AND
EVICTIONS

WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT

HEALTH

Our 24 Commissioners represent the public, private and nonprofit sectors, and they collaborate with community experts and leaders in the four key areas to find solutions. The Commission's push for action to produce improvement complements like-minded organizations' pursuit of economic equity for women and aligns with Columbus area leaders' goal to ensure all residents in the region improve their economic and social well-being.

To address the root causes of gender- and race-based inequities, we use a data-driven approach and listen to women's stories about challenges and obstacles limiting their ability to thrive. Deep civic engagement keeps women's issues at the forefront of community conversations.

The Commission is a trusted convener. We bring women together to create a deeper understanding of their experiences and lift up their stories to inspire others. The Commission is a fierce advocate — leveraging its insight into the community to recommend meaningful solutions for positive change.

The Commission's mission and work has been advanced by several City of Columbus and City Council initiatives impacting equity in the workplace, housing and evictions, workforce development and health. This progress report highlights these City initiatives and many Commission accomplishments building the pathway to economic security for women and their families in our community.



EQUITY IN THE WORKPLACE

One in four women in central Ohio is economically insecure, and gender and race wage gaps shape the local story: Women, on average, earn 81 cents for every dollar earned by white men, and Black and Hispanic women earn just 64 cents and 61 cents, respectively, for every dollar earned by white men.

A report commissioned by the Women's Fund of Central Ohio is the first to analyze the gender and race wealth gap in Central Ohio. It found harsh inequities:

For every \$1.00 owned by a single man in Central Ohio:



Single women own \$0.40



Hispanic women own \$0.08



Black women own \$0.02

Since its inception, the Columbus Women's Commission has been driving community dialogue to better understand the root causes of these pay inequities and to examine data to inform the public on how to create attainable, measurable change to close these gaps. Its effort to increase awareness about inequity and its root causes has created an open and transparent community conversation, and it has challenged leadership across all sectors to address workplace policies and wage disparities.

“Advancing Columbus in the modern-day economy requires that leaders intentionally focus on disparities in the workforce, and the Columbus Commitment has challenged employers to do just that. Our vision to make Columbus the most prosperous region in the U.S. distinguishes our market, as does the work of the Commission. A collective effort to reduce inequities faced by women is a competitive advantage.”

- Alex Fischer, President and CEO, the Columbus Partnership

As a result of the Commission's 2017 launch of The Columbus Commitment: Achieving Pay Equity Pledge, more than 250 local business, nonprofit and public employers have signed the pledge to commit to help close the gender wage gap in central Ohio and address workplace policies that limit economic opportunity for women.

The Commission's best practices events, regularly held for pledge adopters, assist these organizations in taking steps to address equity in the workplace within their companies. A recent survey of adopters reveals numerous changes in their policies and practices, including some raising their minimum hourly wage to \$15 for full-time employees.

“Gender equity in the workplace is an economic opportunity that will lift our community to new and inclusive heights of prosperity. Working collaboratively with business and community leaders, the Commission created a key launch pad to achieve gender equity - The Columbus Commitment. The Commission celebrates the 250+ organizations who have adopted the Commitment, joining us on our journey to achieve gender equity.”

- Barbara Smoot, Columbus Women's Commission member and chair of the Equity in the Workplace Committee

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **More than 250 local employers have signed** The Columbus Commitment: Achieving Pay Equity Pledge to better understand and internally address gender- and race-based wage disparity.
- **The Commission has hosted two annual Columbus Commitment: From Signature to Action events**, providing pledge-adopting employers with strategies to reduce the wage gap and implement workplace policies for gender equity. Local leaders have shared best practices with more than 500 attendees at these events.
- **The Commission’s Lunch & Learn series launched** in 2018 aims to create learning opportunities for Columbus Commitment adopters. These events feature topics such as paid family leave, implicit bias, workplace policies, and pay analysis.

CITY OF COLUMBUS IS LEADING BY EXAMPLE

The City of Columbus is leading by example with three impactful internal policy changes made in 2019 to affect gender and race-based workplace inequities:

- **The City now pays all its full-time city employees** a minimum of \$15 per hour
- **It has adopted a paid family leave** and caregiver policy for all full-time employees
- **Implicit bias training has expanded** for city employees to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace

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“Closing the wage gap has been a top priority for my administration. As one of the city’s biggest employers, I knew Columbus had an opportunity to lead by example.”

- Mayor Andrew J. Ginther

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PAY EQUITY

The Commission surveyed Columbus Commitment adopters for the first time in the fall of 2019. Results indicate taking the Pay Equity Pledge is broadening awareness of inequities and providing solutions to address them.

Nearly two-thirds of employers that adopted the Columbus Commitment responded to the survey:

- 55% have conducted a company-wide pay equity review/analysis
- 50% no longer include past salary in the hiring process
- 59% have strategic diversity & inclusion goals
- 53% offer paid family leave for all employees
- 57% credited the Commission with raising gender equity awareness

Visit the Columbus Women’s Commission website to download The Columbus Commitment pledge and view the list of adopters - www.columbus.gov/payequity.

“We removed the salary history from applications.”

“We have updated our employee handbook to include 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave and instituted a retirement savings program for employees.”

FOCUS AREA

HOUSING

Women, especially African-American women with children, are disproportionately affected by the high eviction rate in Franklin County — one of the highest rates in the state.

Nearly 18,000 eviction cases are filed in Franklin County Municipal Court each year. The Columbus Women’s Commission has studied the eviction data, and listened to women’s stories in a focused effort to provide needed resources and prevent eviction when possible. The Commission understands having an eviction record often creates ripple effects, making it difficult to secure housing in the future.

To gain deeper knowledge of the process, Commissioners visited Eviction Court in Franklin County Municipal Court and spoke with women about their experiences. In an effort to provide immediate access to helpful resources for those facing eviction, the Court relocated the Self-Help Resource Center to be in closer proximity to the eviction courtroom.

After the relocation, the Center served more families in the last quarter of 2018 than in 2016-17 combined.

In a related effort, Columbus City Council approved a new Eviction Prevention Program in 2019 to assist tenants facing eviction. The \$300,000 fund is utilized by Impact Community Action and the Legal Aid Society of Columbus to provide emergency financial assistance and legal representation to tenants facing evictions. This fund is targeted to keep at least 100 Columbus tenants in their homes each year.



According to The Urban Institute

57% of Columbus families are economically insecure,
with less than \$2,000 in savings — above the national average of 52%.

After an income disruption, these families are:



14x more likely to be evicted



3x more likely to miss a rent or mortgage payment



3x more likely to miss a utility payment



“We’ve heard the stories. We know the statistics and impact on the community. Most of the people we encounter have suffered a sudden financial hardship that leads to being evicted. We are stepping in with the pilot program to provide help.”

– Columbus City Councilmember Shayla Favor, Commissioner of the Columbus Women’s Commission





ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **The Franklin County Municipal Court relocated the Self-Help Resource Center**, making it more accessible to women and families in need of immediate services that may prevent or delay eviction.
- **The Eviction Prevention Program was launched** in October 2019 to assist women and families with emergency financial and legal support for housing stability and homelessness prevention.
- **Columbus City Council approved changes to strengthen city code** in prosecuting retaliatory evictions and support tenants' right to occupy safe housing. Now, landlords must explain why they are filing, or threatening to file, an eviction notice against tenants who have made good-faith complaints about their housing conditions.
- **The Commission and Prevent Homelessness Collaborative hosted 9** Stabilizing Families Learning Exchange for community leaders to dialogue and learn together about how to impact families facing housing instability.
- **Many partners, including the Legal Aid Society of Columbus and Franklin County Jobs and Family Services**, have been steadfast in their dedication as we have come together as a community to address evictions.

FRANKLIN COUNTY MUNICIPAL COURT PARTNERS TO UPDATE EVICTION PRACTICES

As the Columbus Women's Commission studied eviction data and listened to stories of women facing this legal process, it became clear opportunities for policy and programmatic changes were identifiable to assist women and families in housing crises.

The Commission convened discussions with the Franklin County Municipal Court, where eviction cases are filed, and other community partners to consider how to affect change and impact the county's high eviction rate that disproportionately impacts women.

In August 2019, Franklin County Municipal Court endorsed five policy recommendations. Working groups are currently underway to design implementation strategies for each recommendation. One new process already implemented allows people with eviction records to complete a standard application form requesting removal of their record from online access.

"This new process will assist people with eviction records to move forward with their lives," said Administrative and Presiding Judge Ted Barrows.

In another update to eviction practices, the Municipal Court Clerk's Office will only display eviction records going back three years on its website to attempt to lessen the impact on accessing future housing. This resulted in over 400,000 prior eviction cases being removed from online access, with some cases dating back as far as the early 1990s.

Judge Barrows said the court has put innovative projects on site to assist people facing eviction, such as Community Mediation Services, the Legal Aid Society of Columbus Tenant Advocacy Project and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services' Prevention, Retention and Contingency program.

In addition, the court's Self-Help Resource Center was relocated on site and has two full-time attorneys to provide assistance and education about how an individual may prevent an eviction from being filed, contest an eviction, or plan a safe, dignified exit from the rental property if necessary.

"To the extent possible, we want to make the eviction process more understandable and more navigable for people so they feel they have been treated fairly," Judge Barrows said.

FOCUS AREA

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

One in three households in Franklin County is headed by a woman. The poverty rate for woman head of households with children is double of all households.

Barriers to women’s economic security are significant: limited access to jobs that pay a livable wage and inequitable workplace policies such as sick days and paid family leave, lack of access to child care and lack of transportation are among them.

The Columbus Women’s Commission is advancing the community conversation about the need for quality child care through focus groups and policy recommendations addressing the benefits cliff – when families suddenly lose public benefits due to a small increase in earnings. The Commission supports efforts to ensure access to affordable quality childcare while also educating women about career paths that help them attain economic security.

Specifically, the Commission is building awareness that skilled trades offer viable career opportunities and equity in the workplace for women. The Commission hosted a Women in the Trades Learning Session in March 2019 with more than 150 attendees to educate women and minorities about the path to economic security trade careers offer.

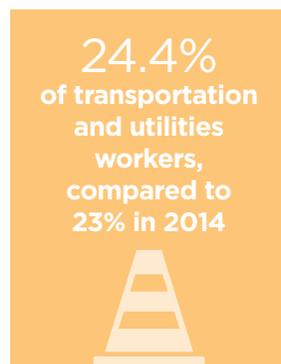
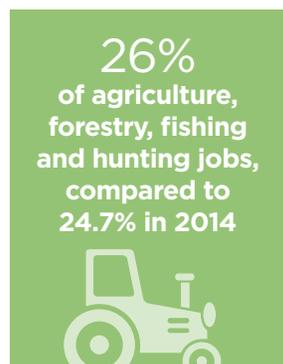
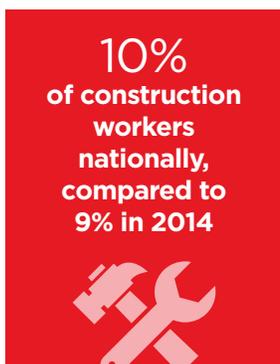
In a partnership with Chicago Women in the Trades, the Commission is developing a Columbus plan to create a pipeline for women in the trades and explore the impact of best practices such as accessible child care that support these careers.

City of Columbus initiatives support the Commission’s focus to improve workforce development for women. Community Benefits Agreements guarantee a local workforce percentage on city building construction projects. The agreements offer benefits such as apprenticeships, focused job recruitment, and diversity and inclusion plans.

The City has hosted several building trades and apprenticeship fairs to encourage greater inclusion of women and minorities. A Contracting Opportunities Outreach Event in March 2019 educated women and minority-owned businesses about upcoming projects and how to become certified to do business with the city.

The number of women pursuing careers in male-dominated jobs is increasing nationally.

Currently, women make up:



Data from the National Center for Children in Poverty indicates

A single mother with 2 children ages 3 and 6 has these basic monthly budget needs:

\$811
in rent

\$571
in food

\$1,423
in child care

\$411
in transportation

9% of women in Franklin County lack a high school diploma

18% have incomes below the federal poverty level

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

To further its workforce development work, the Columbus Women's Commission:

- **Hosted a Women in the Trades Learning Session** in March 2019 to educate women and minorities about careers in the trades and encourage their participation. These careers typically offer equity in the workplace and paid time off.
- **Helped to increase workforce development opportunities** for women and minorities through the city's Community Benefit Agreements on select city building projects.
- **Hosted the Women's Resiliency Celebration** in June 2019 to celebrate the combined strength and individual resiliency of nearly 1,000 survivors of human trafficking, sexual assault, and domestic violence from the Columbus area.

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“Women helping women is real. I have learned that this special connectedness and resilience phenomenon exists with all women, which propelled the vision of a celebration to include as many women and all others who work alongside them and care deeply for them.”

- Paul M. Herbert, CATCH Court Judge, Franklin County Municipal Court.



CELEBRATING SURVIVOR RESILIENCY AND STRENGTH WITH A SPECIAL CONCERT

The Columbus Women's Commission joined with 20 partners to host a celebratory concert to honor the strength and resiliency of Columbus area women who survived human trafficking, sexual assault and domestic violence.

The June 2019 event at the Riffe Center featured Grammy-nominated artist Janiva Magness, a survivor of extreme trauma whose songs highlight the power of survivors' resiliency and commitment to improving their lives. Nearly 1,000 survivors were in attendance.

“Just having all the survivors in the room celebrating together in one space was powerful. It was a celebration these women will never forget,” said Paula Haines, Executive Director of Freedom a la Cart, a key partner in the event and local organization assisting survivors in building a new life with practical job skills as they heal and prepare to enter the workforce.

Haines said the concert sent a message to survivors of ‘We value you. We see you as a victim and survivor.’ She added, “That in itself is empowering to the women.”

Freedom a la Cart offers work experience skills to victims of human trafficking to prepare them for the workforce. Haines said the Commission's workforce development focus helps advance the mission “by opening windows to opportunities these women never thought of before,” including careers in the skilled trades that offer equity in the workplace and economic security.

The resiliency concert was the brainchild of Franklin County Municipal Court Judge Paul Herbert, who presides over CATCH Court — Changing Actions to Change Habits — to help local victims of human trafficking.

CATCH Court is nationally recognized for its two-year, treatment-oriented program. It has served more than 500 women since 2009 and is being replicated in other Ohio communities and across the country.



FOCUS AREA

HEALTH

Ohio is the only state in the country with no mandated health education standards for schools. The birth rate among teens aged 15-19 in Franklin County is 26.7 births per 1,000 females — higher than the U.S. and Ohio rates.

Teen pregnancy often initiates a cycle of poverty for women, with only 38% of teen girls who have a child before the age of 18 earning a high school diploma by 22. When women are in control of when, and if, they have children, they take control of their economic futures.

The Columbus Women’s Commission’s work in the area of health is focused on increasing access to comprehensive, medically accurate health education for Columbus teens.

Ohio is the only state in the country with no mandated health education standards for schools. Working with the City of Columbus CelebrateOne Initiative and education partners, the Commission is influencing local policy to bring comprehensive, medically accurate teen health education to Columbus City Schools’ students in the 2019-2020 school year. This education will expand to more students in local school districts soon.



Ohio ranks 22nd in the U.S. in teen pregnancy rates.

From 2011 to 2018 there was a 21% decrease in the Franklin County infant mortality rate, from 9.6 to 7.6 deaths per 1,000 live births. Although the infant mortality rate has decreased for both non-Hispanic Black and non-Hispanic White babies,

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **In a partnership with CelebrateOne, the Commission was awarded a \$10,000 grant** by the Women’s Fund of Central Ohio to support teen pregnancy prevention education in a second Franklin County school district with demonstrated need.
- **The City of Columbus adopted a paid family leave** and caregiver policy for all full-time city employees.
- **Columbus City Council passed legislation to provide free menstrual products** in all 29 City recreation centers, and it will expand availability of these free products to all Columbus City Schools buildings and all municipal buildings.
- **City Council created a diaper changing station grant program** in 2017 to increase equal access to diaper changing stations in small businesses and organizations for all parents and guardians in Columbus. Eligible individuals and businesses in the city may receive up to two baby changing stations at no charge.

Non-Hispanic Black babies in Franklin County are still two times as likely to die before their first birthday as non-Hispanic White babies



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THANK YOU TO OUR PAST COMMISSIONERS

We are grateful for their impactful leadership and expertise, and for building a solid foundation for the Commission's work.

- CHRISTIE ANGEL
- ELIZABETH BROWN
- VICTORIA CALDERON
- JANELLE COLEMAN
- NICHOLE DUNN
- NICOL GHAZI
- DANIELLE HARLOW
- TERRI IFEDUBA
- GALE KING
- VINITA MEHRA
- MARY B. RELOTTO
- BRUCE WIMBISH

THE 2020 PLAN OUTLINES CONTINUED MOVEMENT TOWARD GENDER EQUITY.

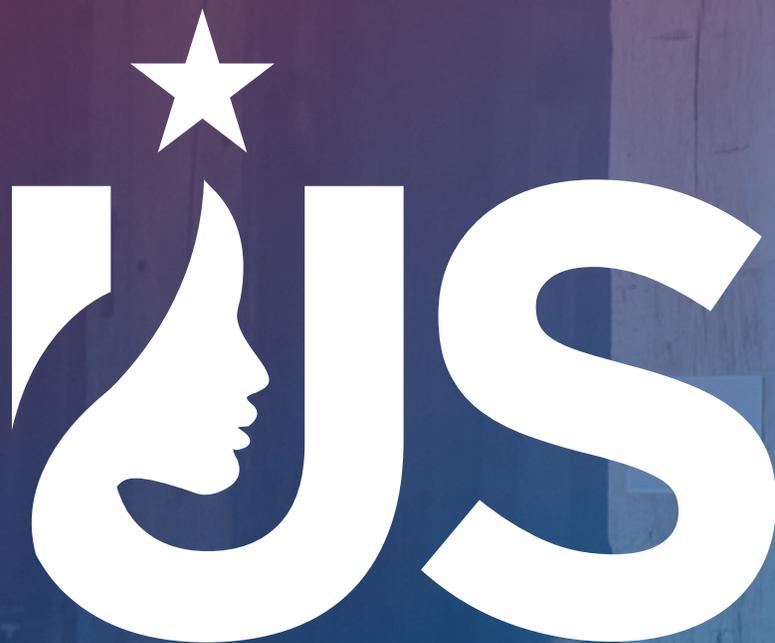


Mayor Andrew J. Ginther and First Lady Shannon Ginther consider gender equity a value central to their work in Columbus. In 2020, the Columbus Women's Commission will continue to lead and convene community stakeholders to identify opportunities that advance gender equity. In tandem, the Mayor's Office will continue to be a leader in developing and implementing gender equity policies and programs for its employees and residents.

Accordingly, the Commission's 2020 Plan focuses on internal and external strategies and initiatives to advance workplace gender equity, affordable housing and health services without gender- and race-based disparities. Among our efforts:

- **The Commission will continue to promote gender equity in the workplace** through the employer-led Columbus Commitment: Achieving Pay Equity Pledge, as the City of Columbus works toward creating a gender equitable workplace for its municipal workers.
- **With a grant awarded by the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund**, the Commission and City will develop a municipal roadmap for financial empowerment strategies for women and families. The Columbus roadmap and implementation will be based on what women and families need to address financial instability, city policy priorities that address needs, and partnership opportunities that create solutions.
- **The Commission will continue building a pipeline that increases women representation in skilled trade careers** paying a living wage. It will encourage skilled trade employers to take the Columbus Commitment pledge.
- **To decrease Franklin County's high eviction rate and provide stable housing**, the Commission will continue to work with Eviction Court, the City of Columbus, community partners and social service agencies to find ways that better assist women and families facing eviction and family disruption.
- **With a grant from the Women's Fund of Central Ohio**, the Commission will expand evidence-based teen health education to another Franklin County school district based on needs criteria and recommendations from a CelebrateOne task force.
- **The Commission will review existing services for human trafficking survivors** and barriers that affect them while exploring local policy opportunities to assist them.





To learn more about the work of the
Columbus Women's Commission, visit:
 www.columbus.gov/womenscommission

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