

Resolution No.: 20-1050
Introduced: March 3, 2026
Adopted: March 3, 2026

**COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

Lead Sponsor: Council President Fani-González, Councilmembers Mink, Stewart, Katz, Luedtke, Friedson, Jawando, Evans, Council Vice President Balcombe, and Councilmembers Glass and Sayles

SUBJECT: Supporting the Principles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Background

1. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is a treaty adopted in 1979 by the General Assembly of the United Nations. CEDAW is often described as an international Bill of Rights for women, as it aims to establish a comprehensive international framework to eliminate discrimination against women and advance gender equity. In February 2026, during its 92nd session and 45th anniversary commemoration, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women reaffirmed CEDAW as a living framework for addressing contemporary challenges, including gender-based violence, economic inequality and emerging forms of discrimination.
2. Although the CEDAW treaty was signed by President Carter in 1980, the United States Senate failed to ratify the treaty. One hundred eighty-nine (189) countries have ratified CEDAW. The United States is one of only a few countries that have not ratified the treaty, along with Sudan, Somalia, Iran, Tonga, and Palau. CEDAW affirms that discrimination against women violates the principles of equality and human dignity and calls on governments at all levels to ensure equal and equitable rights and opportunities in employment, education, healthcare, economic participation and protection from violence.
3. Although the United States has not ratified CEDAW, Montgomery County firmly believes in the principles embodied in the treaty and recognizes its importance as a framework for advancing equality and human dignity.
4. Montgomery County has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to uplifting women and girls through policy leadership, public education, community partnerships, economic empowerment initiatives, workforce development programs, recreation and sports activities, and direct services that promote safety, health, and opportunity. The Council

has also commissioned reports from the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) addressing gender equity, including OLO Report No. 2022-3, *Gender Equity in Local Sports Programs* and OLO Report No. 2021-09, *The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women, to guide evidence-based policymaking*.

5. The Montgomery County Commission for Women, established in 1972, serves as a vital advisory body dedicated to advancing women’s economic security, leadership, education, health, and safety, suppression against all forms of exploitation and trafficking and continues to provide policy guidance, advocacy and community education to strengthen gender equity throughout the County.
6. The County has demonstrated leadership through meaningful legislative action, including the 2019 Montgomery County Pay Equity Act, enacted to address persistent wage disparities and promote greater fairness in compensation. Studies show that the gender pay gap begins early in a career and follows women from job to job, with women—particularly women of color—often starting and remaining at lower salaries and facing barriers in salary negotiation and promotions.
7. In 2022, the County Council enacted legislation (Council Bill 42-21) to establish an Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity in Montgomery County to strengthen planning, accountability and equitable access to high-quality childcare services. Access to affordable and reliable early care is essential to enabling women to enter, remain in and advance within the workforce. Too often, women face significant barriers, including high childcare costs, limited availability of quality providers, inflexible work schedules and disproportionate caregiving responsibilities that reduce earnings and career advancement opportunities.
8. In 2025, the County Council unanimously enacted the Uplifting Victims and Immigrant Safety Act (Expedited Bill 26-24) to strengthen protections for immigrant victims of crime and to remove unnecessary barriers to accessing U visa certifications. While the Act protects all eligible victims, immigrant women represent over 50% of U and T visa applicants, reflecting their disproportionate vulnerability to domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence. Fear of deportation or family separation often prevents survivors from reporting crimes or seeking assistance. By eliminating restrictive local requirements and affirming support for victims who cooperate with law enforcement, Montgomery County reinforced its commitment to public safety, justice and the protection of vulnerable residents.
9. Montgomery County reaffirms its commitment to uplifting women and recognizes the intersectionality of the issues that affect them, including economic opportunity, education, childcare, safety and health. The County also affirms women’s rights to vote, hold public office and participate in nongovernmental associations and organizations. Supported by robust data and analysis, a respected Commission for Women and a dedicated County Council—currently a majority-women body—the County has made meaningful progress while acknowledging that continued efforts are necessary to strengthen protections and

advance gender equity and ensure the rights of all women, including those of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution:

1. Montgomery County Council expresses its strong support for the principles and goals of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and recognizes its continued global relevance as reaffirmed during the Convention's 45th anniversary and most recent session of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.
2. The County affirms its intention to continue work to advance gender equity, including expanding access to high-quality early care and education, while seeking guidance and working closely with the Montgomery County Commission for Women and other trusted community partners.

This is a correct copy of Council action.



Sara R. Tenenbaum
Clerk of the Council