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Shapiro Administration Releases 2026 State of the Woman Report, First in More Than Two Decades

Developed by the Governor's Advisory Commission on Women, the 2026 State of the Woman Report examines the progress women have made in Pennsylvania over the last 60 years and identifies the gaps that still exist among women of all backgrounds.

This new report was informed by the voices, experiences, and priorities of women in all 67 counties through a statewide listening tour featuring hundreds of women and more than 10,800 survey responses.

Harrisburg, PA – Today, **First Lady Lori Shapiro** and **Executive Director of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Women Ashley Walkowiak** joined advocates, stakeholders, and women from across Pennsylvania to release the Commonwealth's 2026 *State of the Woman Report*, the first comprehensive assessment of the status of women in Pennsylvania in more than twenty years.

Developed by the Governor's Advisory Commission on Women, the *State of the Woman Report* builds on Pennsylvania's inaugural *Report on the Status of Women* in 1966 and the most recent report from 2004, examining the progress women have made in Pennsylvania over the last 60 years and identifying the gaps that still exist among women of all backgrounds. The report combines historical analysis, current data, and firsthand experiences from women in rural, suburban, and urban communities to provide a comprehensive picture of the current status of women throughout the Commonwealth.

"We have made tremendous strides in the fight for women's equality, but right now, women's freedoms are under attack at the federal level and many of the challenges they face have intensified as a result of longstanding disparities. My Administration has worked diligently to protect and advance the cause of freedom across the Commonwealth and ensure Pennsylvania women have more opportunities to succeed and thrive," said **Governor Josh Shapiro.** "This report – the first of its kind in over two decades – reflects the diverse perspectives of women from different backgrounds and communities across Pennsylvania and charts a path forward where women have better health care outcomes, more economic security, and are free from the epidemic of violence."

"For too long, women have carried the weight of these challenges without feeling seen, heard, or reflected in public policy," said **First Lady Lori Shapiro.** "This report elevates the voices of women from every corner of Pennsylvania and gives us a clearer understanding of the realities they face. Their stories must not only be heard; they must drive action. By working together to remove barriers and expand opportunity, we can

build a Commonwealth where every woman has the support, security, and freedom to chart her own course."

This report was informed by research and an extensive statewide engagement effort, including a 13-stop listening tour in rural, suburban, and urban communities and 10,814 survey responses from women representing all 67 counties. This report combines data, research, and direct feedback to provide a comprehensive picture of women's experiences, opportunities, and challenges throughout the Commonwealth.

Key issues affecting women and families identified in this report include health and wellness, economic security, caregiving, workforce participation, education, public safety, and violence against women. Its findings are intended to help guide policymakers, community leaders, employers, and advocates as they work to improve outcomes for women throughout Pennsylvania.

Some of the policy recommendations in this report include:

- **Invest in trauma-informed education and mental-health supports**. Increase investment in trauma-informed schools, school-based behavioral health, healthy relationship education, emotional wellness, and conflict resolution.

- **Establish safe staffing standards in healthcare settings.** Support evidence-based staffing standards for nurses and frontline healthcare professionals to improve patient safety as well as nurse safety, which could help address burnout and retention challenges.

- **Establish statewide paid family and medical leave laws.** Create a comprehensive framework that allows workers to care for a new child, recover from illness, support family members, or flee domestic violence without losing economic stability.

- **Promote safe and equitable workplaces.** Expand employer education and technical assistance on preventing harassment, discrimination, and retaliation across industries and leadership levels.

- **Increase funding for legal services.** Expand support for legal representation related to protection orders, custody, housing, and other civil matters affecting survivors.

- **Expand housing and economic support for survivors.** Increase investments in emergency shelters, transitional housing, rental assistance, and employment support.

"This report belongs to the women of Pennsylvania. It exists because thousands of women trusted us with their stories, their challenges, their hopes, and their ideas for a stronger future," said **Executive Director Walkowiak**. "To every woman who attended a listening session, completed our survey, shared a painful truth, offered a bold solution,

or simply made the choice to be heard, thank you. Your voices shaped this report from beginning to end."

Since taking office, Governor Shapiro has worked with Democrats and Republicans to provide free period products in our schools, expand the childcare tax credit, double the amount of funding for Pennsylvania's rape crisis centers, and launch the first multi-agency strategic action plan targeting maternal mortality.

The Governor's Advisory Commission on Women was re-established by Governor Shapiro through an Executive Order in June 2023. The purpose of the Commission is to gather information regarding Pennsylvania women's experiences and needs; review, evaluate, and assess programs affecting them; provide the Governor with information and recommendations regarding how to best meet their needs; and provide information about programs and services that may be relevant to Pennsylvania women's needs.

"This report reminds us that data alone is never enough," said **Director of Health Equity at UPMC Health Plan Janine Jelks-Seale**. "To truly understand women's health and well-being, we must value lived experience alongside statistics, ask for whom outcomes differ, and work collaboratively across sectors to address the barriers women continue to face"

"The Advisory Commission's work gives women across Pennsylvania a voice, and the *State of the Woman Report* turns what more than 11,000 women shared into a clear path forward," said **Michelle Mikitish, President of the Greater Pittston Chamber of Commerce**. "When women are able to fully participate in the workforce and are financially stable, their families, their businesses and our whole commonwealth are stronger for it."

"The *State of the Woman Report* highlights a critical need facing survivors across the Commonwealth: access to legal services can be the difference between remaining in an unsafe situation and finding a path to safety. Yet, demand far exceeds available resources, leaving too many survivors without the support they need," said **Kelsie Massini, Legal Policy Manager, PA Coalition Against Domestic Violence.** "We urge the General Assembly to use this report to guide funding priorities needed to close this gap."

You can find the full report here.

To learn more about how to get involved with the Commission's work, follow us on Facebook and Instagram and join our stakeholder list by emailing women@pa.gov.

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