



# The Marylander

Volume 93 #4 Summer 2025

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*Mission: To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.*



## President's Message

*By Heather Reichardt, President, AAUW Maryland*

Welcome to summer – it is getting extremely hot as I am writing this in late June! I hope everyone is having a safe and cool break. Having a virtual summer meeting means everyone can attend while staying comfortable at home while engaging with fellow AAUW members.

Details regarding the summer meeting are included in this newsletter. We are excited to have Meghan Kissell, Senior Director for Policy and Member Advocacy, as our keynote speaker. Meghan will update us on AAUW National's strategy to get all members involved in federal public policy, regardless of where you live. And, we will have two training sessions that will help all of us improve our branch operations.

Speaking of Public Policy, the DC/MD/VA Lobby Corps group has been busy this spring advocating for members of both houses of Congress to reject many provisions of the "Big Beautiful Bill" that will harm women and families across the country. The June 12 Lobby Corps Day was especially important. The National staff was able to schedule specific meetings with Senate offices, including the offices of Senators Van Hollen and Alsbrooks. Getting a briefing from Senate staff was encouraging. More information about Lobby Corps is included in Roxann's Public Policy Update.

Carolyn Fisher and I were fortunate to be able to attend the special screening of the film *Lilly* at the invitation of the AAUW DC office. The film was shown in a beautiful small theatre at the Eaton Hotel in DC after a lovely cocktail hour. I did not know the entire story of how Lilly Ledbetter became the face of workplace harassment and pay inequality. Her perseverance in trying to get paid fairly, and at the same rate as her male coworkers, while working in a Goodyear tire plant, was astonishing. I hope everyone has a chance to see the movie.

Thinking ahead, note that the Fall Meeting will be hosted by the Anne Arundel branch on October 18. And, do not forget about the next regional conference in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, September 25-27, 2026. Make sure to mark your calendars!

"See" you on July 26!

*Heather*

## AAUW Maryland Summer Meeting

### July 26, 2025, 9 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

This year, our event is going virtual, making it easier for members from all over Maryland to join in. Our summer meeting is a fantastic, free opportunity to connect with fellow AAUW members, participate in engaging discussions, and learn about upcoming initiatives.

[Register here](#) (free via EventBrite) and you will receive a Zoom link as the meeting date approaches.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/aauw-maryland-summer-meeting-tickets-1424870198119?aff=oddtcreator>

(If you are unable to register via the above link to EventBrite, email Edieallison-at-gmail-dot-com.)

Topics will include enhancing communication with Senators and Representatives in your district and on the Hill; organizing appealing events suggested by the 5-Star program; and understanding and simplifying branch financial management.

### Agenda

- 9:00 am Virtual meeting room will be open to say hello to old friends and meet new ones
- 9:30 am Welcome: Heather Reichardt, AAUW Maryland President
- 9:40 am New Tools to Share AAUW Messages with Legislators: In-District Meetings  
Meghan Kissell, AAUW Senior Director of Policy and Member Advocacy
- 10: 25 am 10-minute break
- 10:35 am 5-Star Program: Align with AAUW strategic priorities & increase branch's impact.  
Heather Reichardt and Dorothy Franquelli, current and former AAUW MD Presidents
- 11:05 am 10-minute break
- 11:15 am Branch Treasurer Training  
Christine Schmitz, AAUW MD Treasurer and AAUW National Board Member
- 12:00 pm 45-minute break for lunch (if needed)
- 12:45 pm Maryland State Board Meeting

All members are welcome to attend.

## Public Policy Update

*By Roxann King, Co-Vice President for Public Policy*

### State News

All our legislative bills that passed and were sent to the Governor have been approved by the Governor. AAUW Maryland supported 14 bills during the 2025 Maryland General Assembly. We supported all 10 bills on the MLAW agenda of bills, as well as four additional bills. Five of the MLAW have been approved by the Governor. The Prescription Drug Affordability Board Act is now law. The Protecting Nursing Home Care Act is now law. The Newborn Nurse Visitation Bill is now law. The Abortion Care Grant Program is now law. The bill extending subsidies for young adults using the Maryland Health Exchange is now law. Two of the additional bills that we supported also won the Governor's approval. The bill directing the Maryland Commission for Women to Advance Implementation of Insurance Coverage for Over-the-Counter Birth Control is now law. The bill providing support to pregnant and parenting students in higher education institutions is now law.

So, what do branches do in the summer in Maryland? They prepare for upcoming elections by holding voter registration drives, they schedule forums for fall for elections occurring in November, and they hold events to educate members and local voters.

A mini-grant for \$300 will be awarded to AAUW Garrett for this year's Women's Equality Day event, "WOMEN'S EQUALITY and CHILDCARE – Amplifying the Issue and Doing Our Part/Serving Our Community!" The event, with five or more partners, is intended to share information, supplies, and food with women whose families are in need. The application for this mini-grant will be available to read on the AAUW Maryland website under Tools for Leaders.

### National News

The changes to AAUW public policy nationally show a strong emphasis on the traditional role of AAUW in enabling women to succeed in higher education. Threats are happening almost daily. Please be a part of the AAUW Action Network so that you are part of our collective voice in opposing these actions. Join the Two Minute Activist at: <https://www.aauw.org/act/two-minute-activist/>

If you are available on Thursday mornings twice a month, think about joining AAUW Lobby Corps. Contact Kalina for more information: [majercakk@aauw.org](mailto:majercakk@aauw.org). Lobby Corps is easiest for those who live near D.C., but all are welcome! Four members of AAUW Maryland have been participating so far. Pictured are AAUW Maryland members Barb Carter, Heather Reichardt, and Edie Allison who visited the offices of Senator Chris Van Hollen, Jr., and Senator Angela Alsobrooks June 12 in D.C.



During the recent Congressional recess, AAUW members from around the country visited their Senators in protest of the Budget Reconciliation Bill. AAUW National Public Policy staff trained members on tools needed to constructively visit the local offices of their Senators.

If you are giving financial support to AAUW, please consider designating one of the two new AAUW funds supporting public policy initiatives.

- 4513 - Defend Higher Education Fund: The Defend Higher Education Fund will enable AAUW to elevate the critical higher education issues impacting women, mobilize advocates across the country, provide strategic resources to students, staff and faculty on campus, and fuel investments in the infrastructure and technology necessary to move our mission forward. Your

support ensures AAUW can effectively fight on behalf of women on campuses across the country and ensure that AAUW remains a trusted and powerful voice for equity.

- 4337-Public Policy Fund: The Public Policy Fund supports the advancement of AAUW's Public Policy Principles and Priorities. AAUW is focused on increasing the impact of our Action Network through growing the number of advocates across the country and providing timely, accurate, and actionable information about our key issues. Support to this fund ensures we have the critical funding necessary to take swift and strategic action when the rights and freedoms of women and girls are under attack.

Thank you. This is my last Public Policy Update, as Judy Carbone and I cede the public policy committee to the new Co-VPS, Barb Carter and Deb Daniels, both former PP committee members. Please welcome them and give them your support.

## AAUW Official Statement on Support for Universities

"Restricting student visas, canceling research grants, and threatening universities' nonprofit status are not acts of governance - they're acts of political retaliation. And they jeopardize women's contributions to innovation and progress in education and research." (posted on AAUW's Facebook page June 10, 2025) (See AAUW national policy updates at <https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/documents/>.)

## AAUW Maryland Convention Program Highlights

*By Yvonne Higgins, Baltimore Branch Co-President*

Held in Gaithersburg on April 26, 2025, the 2025 AAUW MD Convention Program was enlightening. Speakers included Delegate Lily Qi, Robyn Nietert of the Women's Microfinance Initiative, and Bria Marie Hodge, of the Latino Economic Development Center

**Lily Qi** represents the 15th legislative district in the Maryland House of Delegates. As a Chinese immigrant, she spoke how the Chinese Cultural Revolution impacted society and individual lives. In particular, she felt the policing of thoughts and the anti-intellectual policies and practices of the communists to be stifling. She cited the Voice of America radio broadcasts and the writings of Martin Luther King, Jr. as beacons of hope. In 1989, she immigrated to Indiana, which was a cultural shock. She could not understand why Americans were so friendly and generous. Eventually she moved to Montgomery County, worked in academia, and became a leader in immigrant community groups. It was her community work that got her interested in politics. Her success has paved the way for other immigrants to enter the political and community activism areas. As she said, "Only in America can you run for office and be voted for by people who cannot pronounce your name."

Delegate Qi says the public, private, and non-profit sectors need to work in their own lanes for the benefit of all society. Each has its own job to do. Another meaningful quote, "Make the most of where you find yourself."

**Robyn Nietert**, President, Women's Microfinance Initiative, started a microloan (\$100-300) program 25 years ago at her dining room table. Without access to financing and opportunities, women in rural Africa need a small lift to start businesses. Along with a Uganda friend and online training from the Small Business Administration, she developed the Microfinance Initiative. The group trains women in business skills and financial literacy. Once trained, local women leaders take over the loan program.

They have an amazing 98% re-payment rate. The program has expanded to include other east African countries, enabling women to start small businesses.

**Bria Marie Hodge**, Director of Small Business Development, Latino Economic Development Center, spoke about transforming women's lives by providing business education, mentorship, grants, and loans for women to develop local businesses. The program, based in Montgomery and Arlington Counties, provides services to primarily Latino and African-American women in underserved communities. A quote of hers that stood out was, "A loan says, hey I believe in you." Which is quite empowering to a woman starting a business.

Many thanks to Pat Stocker and Kate Campbell Stevenson for organizing this enlightening program.

## What is AAUW's Five Star Program?

AAUW's 5 Star National Recognition Program rewards states, branches, or other affiliated organizations for aligning their work with the AAUW strategic plan and other initiatives that foster the organization's mission of advancing gender equity for women and girls. The program is designed to promote cohesion between AAUW national, states, and branches and increase understanding and implementation of the strategic plan goals.

National recognition allows AAUW to acknowledge and celebrate these affiliates that advance AAUW's mission. Through engagement and activities, affiliates can earn recognition in five major focus areas: Advancement (membership & funds), Public Policy-Advocacy, Governance-Sustainability, Programming, and Communications-External Relations.

Successful completion of each area of focus results in the receipt of a star. For example, to receive a Programming star, a branch or state would need to report holding at least 4 programs that align with AAUW's Strategic Plan.

For the 2024-2025 year, a branch would complete a survey by June 30, 2025. Criteria are also listed for the 2025-2026 year. See the 5 Star program website for 2025 and 2026 here:

<https://www.aauw.org/resources/member/5-star-program/#FY26-Criteria>

## AAUW Launches New Strategic Plan

In May AAUW National announced the launch of AAUW's new strategic plan, reaffirming our commitment to advancing equity for women and girls through education. AAUW was founded more than 140 years ago with this mission, and with the unprecedented attacks we're seeing on higher education, we believe it is more important than ever to focus our efforts in this area.

The three priorities in AAUW's 2025 Strategic Plan are:

- Champion gender equity by directly funding and empowering pathways to higher education for women, supporting women in academia and research, and fostering women's leadership.
- Champion gender equity through education and advocacy for inclusive policies that remove barriers to success in higher education and workplaces.
- Support state and branch efforts and maximize AAUW's financial and operational strength.



## BRANCH ACTIVITIES

### Anne Arundel County Branch Scholarships Awarded

*By Roxann King*

For over forty years AAUW Anne Arundel County Branch has been able to provide scholarships for Anne Arundel County women with funds from our four-day used book sale, held in early November. After handing out bookmarks with collection info at the Severna Park 4th of July parade, we begin collecting in mid-August. Since the COVID 19 Pandemic, the book sale has been increasingly better, due in part to all the down-sizing seniors, but even more, to the use of Square to accept credit payments. Increased income from the book sale means more money to award scholarships. In May, AAUW Anne Arundel County Branch hosted scholarship recipients at our annual spring luncheon.

We have two scholarship programs. The amount available from the book sale is equally divided between the two programs. **Transfer Scholarships** provide college funding for students who graduated from Anne Arundel Community College.

- **Hannah Alexis Kazmarek** is graduating in June from the Chesapeake Science Point Charter High School in Hanover MD. Hannah participated in dual enrollment, completed 60 credit hours at AACC, and received her A.A. degree in December 2024, before the end of her senior year in high school. Hannah will attend University of Maryland Baltimore County in the fall, majoring in psychology.
- **Maria Gudiell** is a repeat recipient, having been awarded a Transfer Scholarship previously in May 2023, when she completed an A.A. in Transfer Studies at AACC. In Fall 2024 Maria transferred from UMCP to University of Maryland Global Campus, allowing virtual attendance. She works in Testing and Tutoring at AACC and is the first member of her family to pursue a college degree.



**Women To Women Scholarships** provide educational grants to Anne Arundel County women choosing to continue their education. These grants are usually for smaller amounts, with more recipients. They do not require completion of an A.A. degree. **Suzanne Furr**, Branch Scholarship Chair is pictured at left with two recipients. **Mihyung Lee** (center in photo), a South Korean immigrant and mother of two school-age children, will enter the Community College of Baltimore County in

the Dental Hygiene program in the fall. She completed her prerequisite courses at AACC with help from a previous W2W scholarship. **Zoie Prandy** (right in photo) was a recipient last year as a Crofton High School senior. Majoring in Film and TV Production at Howard University, she has already been an assistant director for two student films. This summer she will have her own photography business, taking graduation and family pictures. **Hafsa Hamdaoui**, a Crofton High School graduate, will attend University of Virginia next year to study Political Philosophy, Policy, and Law. She hopes to work as an immigration lawyer. In 2024-25, Hafsa was the student member on the Anne Arundel County Board of Education. **Siena Neill** is a Southern High School graduate going to Virginia to major in Architecture. The VT program is a 5-year program which requires students during the fourth year to spend one semester with a US company, and the other semester studying architecture in Europe.

**Mathea Abiara** graduated from Meade High School in 2024. She was awarded a full scholarship for her first year at the University of Maryland studying business management. She deferred her 2024 W2W award to 2025, when it will be needed. Mathea was to attend the 2025 Goldman Sachs Summit

and the Smith Business Leadership Fellows Program which focuses on leadership, innovation, and problem solving.

The book sale also has sponsored two students from local colleges to attend the **2025 National Conference for College Women Student Leaders** at University of Maryland at the end of May. Next year the NCCWSL event will be held in Kansas City, Missouri, from March 7 – 11. Meredith Dales, Anne Arundel Community College Student Government Association President, will attend with residency. Kelly Kane is a St. John's College who also works in the Advancement Office as an administrative assistant and as a student liaison at donor events. Kelly will also attend with residency.

It was a good year: a total of 10 scholarships were awarded. The book sale has continued to yield dollars despite the availability of recorded or print books online.

## **Baltimore Branch Update**

*By Yvonne Higgins, Co President*

At the Annual Baltimore Branch Dinner on May 7, 24 attendees enjoyed companionship, a lovely dinner, and a very interesting speaker. Dr. Abigia Negash, MD, a physician from Ethiopia spoke about her education journey and the profound impact AAUW has had on her education. As an AAUW Educational Foundation Fellow, she is a Master of Public Health (MPH) candidate at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. With a focus on Epidemiology, Biostatistics, and Clinical Trials, she discussed how barriers to care and health disparities in Ethiopia impacted patient outcomes. Dr. Negash was joined by her friends Eyaef Zeru and Soliyana Gizuchew, also students at JHU. Also at the dinner, we elected our new officers and board members. We sincerely thank all branch members who volunteer their time to support AAUW and our branch.



## **Harford County Branch Remembers Bernadette Low**

*By Jeanne Blades, Membership VP*

Bernadette Low passed away on April 18th, 2025, aged 81. Bernadette joined AAUW in 1995 and was always a staunch advocate for AAUW's mission. Bernadette was an exceptionally active member of the Harford County Branch of AAUW. She believed strongly in becoming involved and never rested if there was one more task to do. She served as President of AAUW Harford County from 2013-2017. In addition, she served as VP for Membership and was Public Policy Reporter for the Branch and acted as the branch historian as well. She was always an active supporter for the branch's annual Judith A. Resnik Luncheon to honor one outstanding young woman from each county high school who excelled in the areas of math and science. Many of you will remember Bernadette's friendly presence at AAUW Maryland meetings. As AAUW MD Communications VP, she edited The Marylander from 2014 to 2018. She also served as AAUW Maryland Secretary.

Bernadette's life outside of AAUW was just as remarkable as her involvement within our association. Born in El Paso, Texas, she earned a PhD in English from the University of New Mexico and moved to Maryland in the early 70's to teach English at the Dundalk Campus of the Community College of Baltimore County. While teaching, she took several literary tours to England with her students and founded the honors society. She also developed an early online English course which she continued

to teach online until her passing. Bernadette loved history, was a docent at the Evergreen Museum and Library, and served on the board of the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion. Bernadette was highly respected for all her endeavors and was well-loved and admired for the gentle, lovely, warm-hearted person she was who always had something positive to say and who had a way of making those around her always feel right at home and welcomed.

## **Kensington Rockville Branch Update**

*By Dian Belanger, Branch President*

On Saturday morning, May 3, the Kensington-Rockville Branch held a “field trip.” We toured the Josiah Henson Museum and Park in North Bethesda, where Henson was born into the shameful horrors of slavery on this very site. What he did with the rest of his life, though, would have profound direct and indirect effects on his own times and even today.

Kensington-Rockville Branch members also enjoyed a chance to meet and greet and sample some tasty food at the annual end-of-year potluck. The speaker was Arlinda Clark, Chair of the Montgomery County Commission for Women who provided a brief update on Commission programs, the Women’s Legislative Briefing, and the status of women in Montgomery County. The program also included an update on how women’s issues fared in Annapolis during this last session.

## **Membership Matters Tip - Shape the Future for New Members**

New members — either completely new to AAUW or rejoining after two or more years through the Shape the Future Campaign — can still get 50% off national dues using the coupon code STFFY26. For more information see <https://www.aauw.org/resources/member/leader-resources-tools/state-branch/shape-the-future-campaign/>

## **AAUW Guidance on Public Demonstrations**

AAUW has useful guidance to help members safely and strategically participate in public demonstrations in alignment with AAUW’s mission. Please review the guidance on AAUW’s website at <https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/advocacy-toolkit/> . Here are a few excerpts:

Two general points to remember about advocacy:

- AAUW members should not endorse any activities or act in a manner that could imply AAUW approval or disapproval of a campaign candidate in a partisan election.
- Individuals attending partisan events must do so in a personal capacity—not as representatives of AAUW.

Before you go to a demonstration, AAUW advises that you understand the purpose, research the organizers, and evaluate alignment: Do you feel comfortable supporting the demands or messaging of the event? Do the organizers have a track record of inclusive, nonviolent & respectful action?

Preparing in advance: dress for the weather; carry water, snacks, a small first aid kit; charge your phone and write down emergency contacts off the phone; if appropriate to represent AAUW’s mission, show your AAUW affiliation and send photos to AAUW at <http://advocacy.aauw.org>. Stay safe: Don’t engage with counter-protestors. Know your surroundings. Identify exit routes, stay with a buddy, and have emergency contacts accessible.



## Thank you AAUW Maryland leaders!

### AAUW MD Elected Officers (Executive Board)

**Heather Reichardt**, President (2024-2026)

**Edie Allison**, Vice Pres. for Programs (2025-2026)

**Jeri Rhodes**, Vice President for AAUW Funds (2024-2026)

**Lydia Alcock and Susana Hernández Martín** (2022-2026) and **Roxann King** (2025-2026), Co-Vice Presidents for Communications

**Barb Carter and Deb Daniel**, Co-Vice Presidents for Public Policy (2025-2027)

**Christine Schmitz**, Treasurer (2023-2027)

**(Vacant)**, Secretary (2023-2025) (volunteers welcome & thanks to those who have helped this year)

**Jeanne Blades** Vice President for Membership (2023-2027)

### AAUW MD Committee Chairs (Current Appointed Members of the Board)

**Carolyn Fisher**, Chair of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

**Terry Saylor**, Archivist

**Eileen Menton**, Member of the Bylaws Committee

**Judy Carbone**, ERA Taskforce Chair

**Regional Event Planning Committee:** **Tracy Lantz**, **Carol Mueller**, and **Heather Reichardt**

**2026 Nominating Committee:** **Jacqueline Gray** (Baltimore), **Kate Campbell Stevenson** (Kensington-Rockville), **Pat Stocker** (Bethesda-Chevy Chase), with **Anita Rosen** (past chair, ex officio)(Kensington-Rockville).

**Thanks also to each Branch President, who is also a member of the Board of Directors!**

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### SPECIAL THANKS to those newly elected/re-elected at the 2025 AAUW Maryland Convention:

Edie Allison, Program Vice President (to fill remainder of term)

Roxann King, Co-Vice President for Communications (to fill remainder of term)

Barb Carter and Deb Daniel, Co-Vice Presidents for Public Policy (first 2-year term)

Christine Schmitz, Treasurer (re-elected for second term)

Jeanne Blades, Membership Vice President (re-elected for second term)

**Please don't hesitate to volunteer for the vacant position of AAUW MD Secretary. Contact Heather Reichardt or any member of the board if you have any questions or to volunteer.**

### AAUW Maryland encourages members to consider serving on the State Board.

Get the most out of your AAUW experience! Serving as a Branch or State board member is an excellent opportunity to learn new leadership skills that can help in other areas of life. Service on a Branch or State board also builds connections and close friendships with fellow AAUW members.

**Please contact any member of the 2026 Nominating Committee (listed above) or other officer if you would be interested in any of the following positions to be elected at the 2026 Convention:**

President, Program VP, Funds VP, Communications Co-VP, Secretary

**~ Happy Summer! See you on the AAUW MD Summer Meeting Zoom call July 26! ~**



The Marylander  
AAUW Maryland  
2535 Painter Ct.  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-6868

***Our Mission: To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.***

***Our Vision: Equity for all.***

***In principle and in practice, AAUW values and seeks an inclusive membership, workforce, leadership team, and board of directors. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, geographical location, national origin, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.***

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