

## Belmont Human Rights Commission Statement on Women's History Month

March marks the observance of Women's History Month, giving us an opportunity to celebrate the achievements and contributions of women, and to reflect on the continued discrimination, gender inequality and violence women face every day. From science to politics, the arts to business and more, trailblazing women have led the way for change, and we commemorate the history and the immeasurable impact they have made on our society.

We also recognize that gender inequality is still a major problem in our country and around the world. According to FBI statistics on nationwide homicides, a vast proportion of women killed in the US are killed by current or former intimate partners. The gender-related killings of women and girls has been coined as "femicide" by the United Nations, and other international human rights bodies. While the Department of Justice does track intimate partner homicides, there is no standardized definition for or federal tracking of femicide in the U.S., putting it at odds with many countries in the world.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the problems women face every day. Quarantine-linked domestic violence has increased substantially. A disproportionate share of caregiving has continued to fall on the shoulders of women. Without immediate and long-term action to shore up childcare infrastructure and progressive work-family policies, we cannot advance gender equity.

The number of women in the labor force fell to its lowest point in more than 30 years due to COVID-19 related job losses. We should also note that women in Massachusetts get paid 19% less than men. Although the state passed the Equal Pay Act in 2016, there are still pay discrepancies, and pay inequities need to become part of the public record.

Finally, access to comprehensive reproductive health care, including abortion care, is especially vital to women's health and economic security. All women should be able to access the care they need, no matter how much they earn, where they live or where they get their health insurance. As we celebrate Women's History Month, we continue our commitment to bring awareness to these issues and work towards changing them.

The Belmont Human Rights Commission is dedicated to fighting discrimination in all forms and increasing visibility and awareness of issues regarding diversity and discrimination in our community. If you have experienced discrimination in Belmont, please contact us at [belmont.hrc@gmail.com](mailto:belmont.hrc@gmail.com) or call 617-993-2795.