



MAINE WOMEN'S
LOBBY *AND*
 MAINE WOMEN'S LOBBY
 EDUCATION FUND

 ANNUAL REPORT 2021





LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Equity. Renewal.

In 2021, the Maine Women’s Lobby and MWL Education Fund focused on centering the themes of equity - infusing our work with justice; and renewal - inviting and making space for change and rebirth. We are working from the inside out, to be sure that our organizations’ practices match our promises.

What you may have seen in our public work that reflected these themes are new programs, as we ushered in a significant expansion of free and accessible tools for gender-equitable civic engagement (read on for more about our Summit, Bill Bites, and Citizen Advocacy Toolkit); our most inclusive and inspiring Girls’ Day at the State House (celebrating a quarter-century!); and advocacy that centers the needs and voices of those most left out and harmed by misogyny in public policy.

In our internal work, we focused on equity and renewal by taking a leap of faith and moving to an open nomination process for our Board of Directors and ushering in a large new class of members who represented more regions and more diversity of thought and lived experience than ever before. We worked to level our organizations’ budgets, bringing our salary structure closer to parity. We committed to member leadership of our programming (such as our open process for the Summit planning committee); and greater transparency in our operations however and wherever we could. To renew an organization, to revisit our roots while we grow

toward our future, is hard work. But it’s important and exciting work. Many of these efforts are less visible to the public, but we know that they are bearing fruit. At the end of 2021, we prepared to bring on our second class of Board members through our open nomination process ([see the full list of Board members here](#)), and closed our fiscal year with the confidence to expand our staffing.

Finally, every renewal brings change, and 2021 closed my term as Chair as I stepped off the Boards after six years of service. I could not be more proud to welcome Lucia Chomeau Hunt into her new role as Chair of the Maine Women’s Lobby and MWL Education Fund Boards of Directors. Lucia, along with the staff, the Boards, and our Advisory Council members, will continue to lead the organizations on this journey. Equity, like renewal, is a process that never ends. We will continue to grow a leadership, staff, and systems that are more representative of the people most affected by misogyny and racism in Maine; and to work for legislative solutions, partnerships, and programming to ensure a more just, more gender-equitable future for us all.

In solidarity,

ELIZABETH RIOTTE
2021 MWL & MWL Education Fund Board Chair



SPOTLIGHT ON THE BOARD

In 2021 we welcomed our first class of Board members who joined us through our open nomination process. We launched an open call, and then reached out to partners, allies, and members in 2020 to ensure that our leadership represents the many regions, backgrounds, and lived experiences of people across Maine, especially those most affected by gender inequity and misogyny. We are proud of this unusual approach and the voices and vision that our new members have brought to our leadership team.

Though we have two separate Boards for our two organizations, all members work and meet together to ensure that our efforts are seamless.

MAINE WOMEN'S LOBBY EDUCATION FUND



"I love that MWL is **thinking bigger about what feminism means**, and what we need to work on together to achieve meaningful gender equity for all Mainers."

— Quinn, Auburn



"Working on **intersectional feminism is a critical component in dismantling systems of injustice and inequality**. Being on the Board provides me with opportunities to do this in a safe, healthy, trusted, and empowering space alongside individuals who are deeply committed to advancing the rights of all Mainers."

— Rachel, Portland



"I joined the board because **it is essential to support organizations like the Maine Women's Lobby & MWL Education Fund**, which serve a critical role in advocating and educating people on women's issues."

— Rebecca, Oakland

MAINE WOMEN'S LOBBY



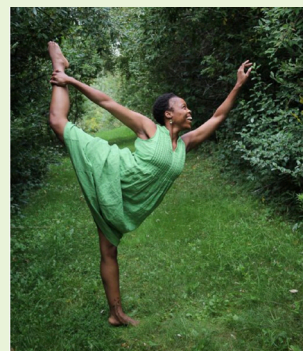
"I am grateful to have the privilege of being on the board of such a thoughtful organization that is **constantly seeking to improve the work we do create a more gender-equitable world** and to center the voices of the people most impacted by sexism, misogyny, and racism."

— Ann, Portland



"We are living in challenging times, and it's easy to feel helpless in the face of large-scale systemic and institutional inequities; **I'm grateful to have the opportunity to help advance public policy for girls, women, and femme-perceived and presenting Mainers through the work of the Maine Women's Lobby.**"

— Meghan, Orono



"**The freedom to vision one on one, and in collective settings as a Last Girl, and Philanthropist, allows growth in me**, so I can continue to protect stolen Wabanaki land for a Womanist future."

— René Goddess, Portland



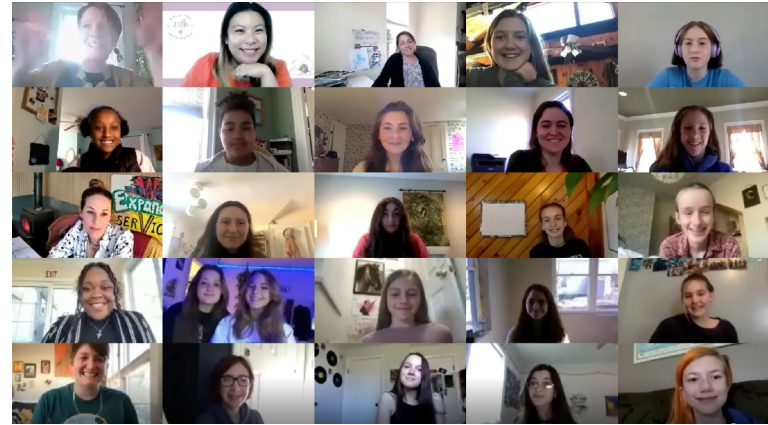
MAINE WOMEN'S LOBBY EDUCATION FUND: 2021

ORGANIZATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

The purpose of the MWL Education Fund is to help Mainers develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to engage in feminist, anti-oppression-based public policy advocacy and civic life.

We do this through programming focused on community building and community organizing in order to increase knowledge, skills, and opportunities for citizens to engage in public policy change.

Our core efforts are Girls' Day at the State House, the Biennial Roadmap for Economic Justice, and the Biennial Women's Summit on Economic Justice.



Board of Directors

Elizabeth Riotte, *Chair*

Lucia Chomeau Hunt, *Vice Chair*

Emily Parker, *Treasurer*

Lauren Jacobs, *Secretary*

Erin Cinelli

Quinn Gormley

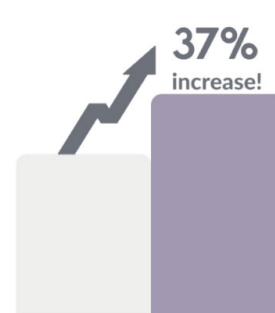
Gretchen Johnson

Sally Struever

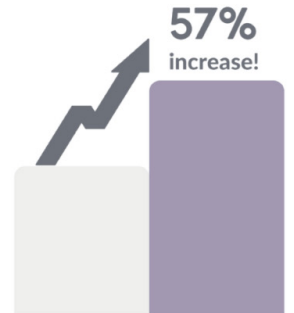
Rachel Talbot Ross

The 25th Girls Day at the Statehouse

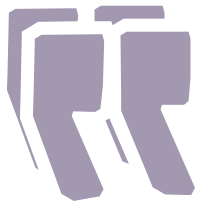
Pre/post surveys show the powerful results of Girls Day.



"I understand how laws and policies are made in Maine."



"I know how to help change policies, laws, and systems in my own community, in Maine, or in the world."



FROM OUR COMMUNITY

The Summit made me feel "excited, hopeful, energized"... "reflective and informed"... Invigorated!"

"I will have the knowledge to make change in my community, my state, my country, and hopefully my world!" Sofia, Cumberland County, Girls Day 2021

"I will make sure that I & other people have their voices heard." Julianna, Hancock County, Girls Day 2021

“
It's empowering to know what is going on politically. And when I use my voice to create positive change for my community, I am doing my part to help others feel this liberation.
Casey, Hampden”



“
Knowing about the political process will give me the power to vote for who will best represent me and my community, and voice my support or opposition when new legislation is introduced.
Kyla, New Gloucester”

Share. Build. Connect.

The Maine Women's Summit on Economic Justice

With Keynote by LaTosha Brown, co-founder of Black Voters Matter.

October 14 & 19, 2021



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

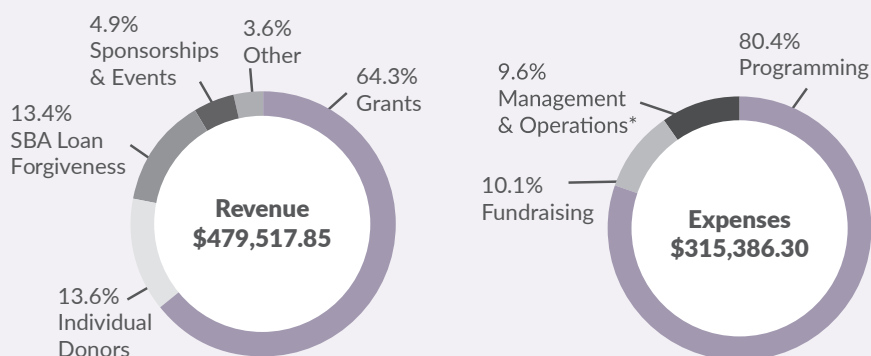
We successfully ran our (second virtual) 25th Girls' Day at the Statehouse in March! Participants heard from **Governor Mills, Senator Collins, Congresswoman Pingree, and Secretary of State Bellows** as opening speakers. We also had the support of an additional 25 mentors, facilitators, and volunteers for weekly sessions throughout the month. Participants **reported a 37 percent increase in understanding of how laws are made; a 57 percent increase in understanding of how to help make change; and a 21 percent increase in their confidence to do so.** We were honored to host these future leaders of Maine!

And we didn't stop there – in October, the Maine Women's Summit on Economic Justice explored the themes of power and policy change with virtual panels, breakout sessions, and live local conversations, and **offered a space for over 150 Mainers to radically reimagine our shared future.** The Summit featured policy leaders such as **Commissioner Laura Fortman of the Maine Department of Labor and Maine Secretary of State Shenna Bellows,** as well as people from communities who have often been left out of the policymaking process - **Amanda Comeau of Survivor Speak USA, and Marco Orlando of Speaking Up for Us** shared their experiences and observations as members of historically marginalized and excluded communities during the event kick-off. Our Keynote Speaker, **LaTosha Brown** (founder of **Black Voters Matter**) invited us to fuel our work for gender equity with voting, values, and vision - and the welcome from Board member René Goddess Johnson was a 'lifetime honor' according to our keynote. Together, we brought people from across Maine and across many lived experiences to envision a better Maine for all of us.

This is the work of MWLEF: we are **opening doors to civic life** in a multitude of ways. Together, we hope to continue connecting everyday Maine people, especially those historically kept out of the halls of power, to each other and to the knowledge, skills, and resources to make meaningful change in their own communities.



FINANCIALS



We operate on a cash basis. The 2021 income is higher than expenses because it includes SBA Loan Forgiveness (from the federal Paycheck Protection Program) that covered 2020 expenses, as well as approximately \$100,000 for efforts to take place in 2022.

*The overhead, operations, and staffing of the MWL Education Fund and the Maine Women's Lobby are shared between the two organizations. Most of our work falls under the MWL Education Fund, because lobbying and legislative advocacy only happens during certain times of the year. However, because some overhead expenses are split equally, the MWLEF's Management and Operations expenses are significantly lower than those of the MWL. Management and Operations include Board and staff support and development, agency infrastructure and policies, overhead, and other efforts to ensure the organization is well-organized, informed, and effective.



MAINE WOMEN'S LOBBY: 2021

ORGANIZATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

The purpose of the Maine Women's Lobby is to promote public policy which increases the health, wellness, safety, and economic security of female-identified Mainers, with a focus on the most marginalized populations and communities.

We do this through local, state, and federal public policy advocacy which centers the experiences and voices of those most affected or harmed by misogyny and oppression.

Our core efforts are focused on legislative advocacy and candidate engagement.

Board of Directors

Elizabeth Riotte, *Chair*

Lucia Chomeau Hunt, *Vice Chair*

Emily Parker, *Treasurer*

Lauren Jacobs, *Secretary*

Ann Danforth

Meghan Gardner

René Goddess Johnson

Layne Gregory

Lisa Miller

Malory Otteson Shaughnessy



FROM OUR COMMUNITY

"Like all women, trans women have a vested interest in ensuring safe access to homeless and domestic violence shelters—because we often need them." Quinn Gormley, Maine TransNet

"Maine immigrants are our family, friends, and neighbors. They are an integral part of our lives and our state. And, like all other Mainers, they need and deserve health care." Rep. Rachel Talbot Ross, bill sponsor

♀️ LD 1335

"Menstruation is a natural process, and necessary for each of you being here today."

- Rep. Denise Tepler, bill sponsor

MaineWomen.org

♀️ LD 965

"It ensures that employees cannot inadvertently enter into them; cannot be forced to enter into them; that they cannot be used to silence victims or protect illegal or unethical forms of discrimination or abuse."

- Maine Women's Lobby

MaineWomen.org

♀️ LD 1559

"The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted what we've known for years: paid family medical leave is necessary, important, and should be implemented in the state of Maine."

- Senator Matthea Daughtry

MaineWomen.org



Bill Bites

Legislative Insights for your Lunch Hour

Legislators & advocates unveil the bills building gender equity in the 130th Legislature: you're invited.

Thursdays @ 12:15-12:45

♀️ Maine Women's Lobby
THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The 130th First Regular Session began like no other - **online**. The Maine Women's Lobby kicked off our session work with **Bait Bag the Band**, Maine's own feminist punk rockers from North Haven, which set the tone for our session as we pursued bills from maternal health access to worker's rights (while fending off attacks on reproductive and trans rights).

There was incredible forward progress in 2021. We worked on bills which expanded access to maternal health care (LD 265); began development of a state Paid Family and Medical Leave program (LD 1559); increased protections for people engaged in commercial sex work (LD 1455); made forward progress on racial equity (LD 2 and LD 1113), and many more. We also were proud to partner with many allies to stop a range of harmful bills. **We were founded to ensure that gender equity would be represented at the State House, and we were there on behalf of our members from January until July.**

At the same time, we know that **the best public policy is made when directly affected people are engaged in the process. In 2021 we radically expanded our tools and resources** to help our members understand the legislative process and grow their skills and confidence to engage and make change. We launched a complete Citizen Advocacy Toolkit, hosted weekly livestreams with legislators and advocates on key bills, and hosted a publicly accessible tracker with the real-time status of over 100 bills relevant to gender equity. **Making sure that the inner workings of the State House are transparent and accessible will continue to be an essential part of our work.**

See the complete [2021 Legislative Report Card here](#).

See [Citizen Advocacy 101 Toolkit here](#).



2021 LEGISLATIVE REPORT CARD

The Maine Women's Lobby 2021 Legislative Report Card includes scores and bill summaries on policies that have real impacts on Mainers.

After a history of child sexual abuse and homelessness, Sam has been engaged in commercial sex work in order to make ends meet. They will now have access to an "economic hardship" defense against being charged with the crime of prostitution (LD 1455).

LD 1455

Alex, a 14 year old trans girl, will get to keep playing on her Junior Varsity soccer team, with the defeat of LD 926.

LD 926

Thanks to LD 1712, 3-year-old Cleo will be enrolled in a high quality preschool program with wraparound family services, to begin school on track.

LD 1712

Sonja is a community college student who won't have to juggle her daily expenses and school fees along with an added tax for her menstrual products thanks to LD 1335.

LD 1335

Mildred is aging at home without family nearby. She is more likely to have affordable, high quality in-home support services without a wait, as the Long-Term Care Workforce recommendations in LD 1573 are implemented.

LD 1573

Aniya was worried she and her wife wouldn't have access to workplace protections because of their same-sex marriage. Now they are reassured that family status is covered in the employment protections in the Maine Human Rights Act thanks to LD 1688.

LD 1688

Batool is struggling with postpartum depression after the birth of her first baby. She can now get supportive services through MaineCare for 12 months after delivery instead of 60 days, thanks to LD 265.

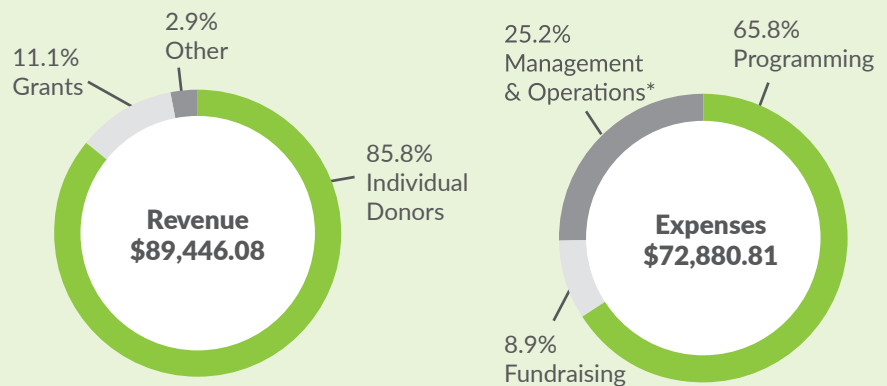
LD 265



Maine Women's Lobby
2021 Legislative Report Card
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2021 Organizational Staff

Destie Hohman Sprague
Executive Director

Logan Mills
Community Organizer
& Office Coordinator

Dania Bowie
Development & Communications
Coordinator



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