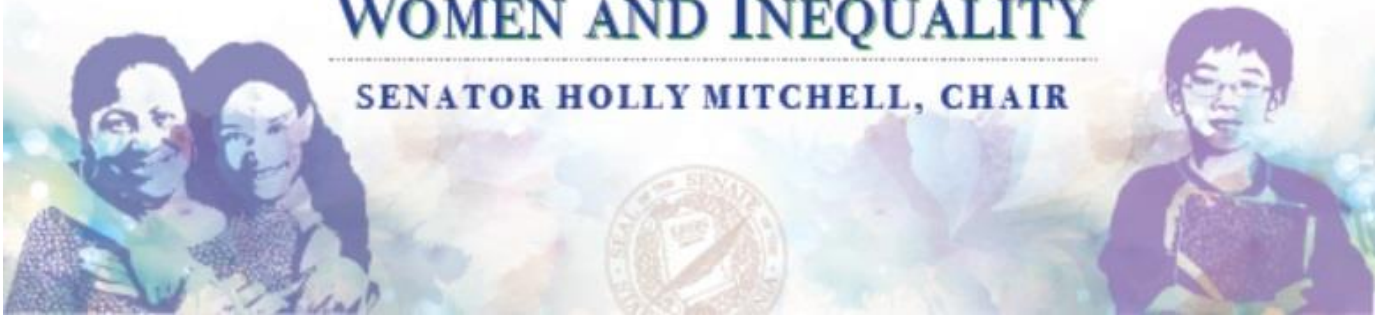


SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON
WOMEN AND INEQUALITY
SENATOR HOLLY MITCHELL, CHAIR



**Select Committee on Women and Inequality: Strategies to Promote Opportunity
June 17-18, 2014 Convening Themes and Recommendations**

On June 17th and 18th nearly 80 women and men, including those directly experiencing poverty, joined together in Sacramento with advocates, agency staff, and policy makers to develop strategies for promoting gender equity, explore the effects of extreme inequality in California and its relation to gender and race, and to provide recommendations on critical issues for further exploration by the Select Committee. In addition to this work, we explored potential legislative action and budget investments to pursue in 2015. National advocate Sister Simone Campbell, organizer of the Nuns on the Bus, joined us providing a significant link to the national conversation. Below you will find the key observations and recommendations that arose from this discussion.

Inequality often leads to isolation; people living in different worlds that never intersect. Root causes are complex and involve historical, racial and ethnic discrimination. This is further exacerbated by unequal access to education, jobs and the toxic stress that is a result of struggling to survive. But the other side of this isolation is the unity and resilience that arises as a result of it. We see this in stories of mothers who struggle and still achieve better lives for their children and stories of low wage workers who unite to fight for a living wage. We have seen enormous change from social movements, but we must focus on the change that has yet to be realized.

Undocumented women, single mothers, homeless, foster youth, women and children of color, students, low-wage workers, survivors of domestic violence, victims of human trafficking, and families of incarcerated persons were the groups identified as facing harsh realities created by poverty, gender and racial inequity. Without access to childcare and education, jobs that pay a living wage, affordable housing, retirement security, career training, effective integrated social services and welfare programs that provide financial support, these women have little hope of breaking free from the shackles of poverty. All of society benefits when poverty and inequity are alleviated.

This narrative summarizes the recommendations made to the Select Committee for future discussion as well as legislative and budget actions to consider for 2015. While it is challenging to summarize the robust discussion, we have also included take-aways from the in-depth small group discussions of the first day that laid the basis for the consideration of recommendations on the second day.

Topics for Comprehensive Discussion by the Select Committee

Discussion during the Convening and Select Committee Hearings contributed to the identification of the following priorities for further in-depth analysis and consideration:

1. De-stigmatize and Rebuild the Safety Net with multi-generational and integrated policies promoting opportunity and equity. We must take a structural view of poverty and evaluate how gender and race exacerbate the disparities.
2. Examine the Intersection of Race, Ethnicity and Poverty rather than view each in a silo and develop policies to eradicate disparity and stigma while building on competencies, resilience and strength that currently exist in communities of color. Explore the use of racial impact statements, similar to fiscal and environmental impact statements, in order to reduce racial disparities in all programs, including within the criminal justice system.
3. Childcare and Child Development are key policy and investment priorities. Far too many young children in poor families lack access to the very early care and education that can help them thrive and mitigate the impacts of poverty, toxic stress, structural barriers to mobility and education, trauma, domestic violence and deep poverty.
4. Examine the Situation of Undocumented Women. They often fill the lowest paying jobs, lack sick and family leave, receive no health coverage, suffer exposure to higher rates of toxic chemicals, and too often experience sexual harassment in the workplace.
5. Support the Feminization of Leadership. Encourage women to take leadership in their workplaces and communities. Women in poverty who face a variety of challenges should be prominent voices in spaces of leadership because they are key to policy development, strategic thinking and program evaluation.
6. Promote Public-Private Partnerships and Corporate Responsibility. Better integrate and improve the funding options for public and private support. Highlight employers with innovative policies and living wages. Companies that do not provide a living wage and family-friendly policies put a strain on the social safety net and harm women and children.
7. Link state action to federal initiatives, including Leader Pelosi's *When Women Succeed America Succeeds* campaign and federal legislation and investment to eradicate poverty and racial and gender inequity.
8. Legislative Action and Budget Investments for 2015: Numerous proposals related to the issues contained in this Report were proposed and will be thoughtfully considered.

Summary of Small Group Discussions

1. Women's Equity as it Intersects with Race and Ethnicity

- We must define race and ethnicity. Race has a stronger political impact and defines who we are. Ethnicity is cultural. We tiptoe around race and sexism. These are major barriers.
- The relationship between gender and race and inequality in the workforce means opportunities are limited, especially for young people. Multi-generational stereotyping results in low-level jobs and stigma. The lack of quality jobs in communities of color results in decade after decade of organized poverty and few opportunities to become self-sufficient.
- Sectors with predominance of women of color are not well-represented by labor and few pathways to better opportunities are available. It is difficult to find mentors and resources.
- Education has not helped women of color transition out of poverty. 1% of Latinas have a Master's Degree. The achievement gap affects the process at all levels and vocational education is increasingly unlikely to lead women out of poverty. Inequalities begin before birth and contribute to the achievement gap. Employers view pregnant woman as a problem from a productivity perspective. Teenagers will not complete education.
- State policy can better serve ethnic/racially diverse society by re-thinking and re-framing the safety net and enhancing the safety net with other ideas such as earned income tax credit, partnering economy with vacant housing buildings, partnering with industry, and providing shelter and access to food and education.
- There is a divide between education and the social service safety net (e.g. CalWORKs doesn't prepare people for educational degree). We should tie programs together. Very little done in pregnancy prevention, especially for young people. We should assess children at an early age and wrap services around that child.
- We should ensure undocumented children get services, revisit Prop 209 and bring race to the table.
- Imbalance of power is intentional. Systems embedded in inequality lead to economic isolation. While we have progressed towards non-discrimination, people do it subliminally/ personally. Gender/race biases are central to inequality—if babies not of color were at issue, resources would be there.
- Leadership tables (including within the Legislature) are White and feel like apartheid—very difficult to change the tradition. Traditions create inequality.

Welfare stereotypes are developed towards women of color—perceptions evolved and are continually influenced by race/ethnicity. Those who are not poor will judge you through their lens.

- People are poor because they don't have enough money. Give them more money and they won't be poor. We should change the system for one full generation and give people enough resources. A study showed families who received \$3,000 changed their lives. We need to do something radical—give \$45,000 to everyone in poverty over one generation.

2. Women in Poverty (this summary includes two group discussions)

- The most critical challenges facing women in poverty and deep poverty were defined as childcare access, link to job and training schedules, access to jobs with living wages, CalWORKs reengagement, and lack of affordable housing. The discussion highlighted the trauma faced by women and children, including lack of support systems and toxic stress in communities.
- Childcare/Preschool was discussed at some length, including the need to see it as a two generation program outcome including child development as well as work support. Parents should be lifted up as leaders in programs and their communities. Also the difficulties of current subsidy rules, funding disruptions and lack of access must be changed.
- Children in poverty experience a lack of stability. Children under age 3 have the highest poverty levels—overlapping with a critical developmental period. Poverty creates school attendance challenges (via poor transportation and housing instability) and parents are punished for this. LCCF offers opportunities but we must increase involvement of low-income women in poverty and include birth to age five.
- Public perceptions need to be changed as low-income women often lack a voice in public processes and assistance sometimes comes in a condescending way and with stigma. We need to find sources of support for those who want to advocate. We need to stop thinking in terms of individuals and think about community responsibilities and responses. There needs to be better integration of services in the community, more partnerships with community organizations, and state and county agencies should come to the community, not the other way around. Economic development should be analyzed in terms of poverty reduction. If we're going to fund economic incentives to create jobs, we need to think about what kinds of jobs are created, specifically those that lead to self-sufficiency.
- CalWORKs should make poverty reduction a more prominent goal. Work-first emphasis may result in non-optimal job placements and does not align with self-sufficiency. We need to incentivize productive conversations between

counties/workers and recipients and better long-term planning. We also should examine how to make Community Colleges more accessible, the current time limit makes it difficult to get through school. Subsidized employment should be incentivized.

- The programs and investments seen as most effective include: childcare and preschool, housing, K-12 education, Community Colleges and universities for adults and youth, reproductive health, improving caregiver compensation, retirement, the safety net, training women for higher wage jobs and increasing the Minimum Wage, and rewarding employers who support workers.

3. Women And Extreme Inequality

- Extreme inequality can be recognized by the multiple challenges faced by women and their families, including the duration of time spent in poverty, limited income and assets, isolation based on geography, violence and immigration status, lack of access to services coupled with services that do not meet needs.
- Highlighted groups of women, many of them with children, included seniors with no retirement income, low-wage working women including those in the service sector, homeless women and youth, immigrant women, indigenous people, farm workers, CaWORKs recipients, at-risk youth including students and foster youth, families of incarcerated people, survivors of domestic violence, and victims of human trafficking.
- There are challenges particular to each group as well as overarching issues and multifaceted challenges affecting all groups. Overarching issues include environmental health, pitting groups against each other, security and safety in communities, erosion of entitlements, services not designed for today's families, inequality, and the criminalization of poverty.
- Multiple challenges discussed include lack of childcare, low rates of unionization and lack of benefits for low-wage workers, lack of stable scheduling and job security, lack of services for survivors of domestic violence and victims of human trafficking.

We want to thank the sponsors of the Convening who made it possible to hold a facilitated off-site discussion: The Women's Foundation of California and the California Endowment.

Please visit the Select Committee Website at womenandinequality.senate.ca.gov to follow our work, view Hearings and explore other resources.