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NC Council for Women & Youth Involvement Unveils 2019 Status of Women Health & Wellness Report

YWCA Lower Cape Fear and UNC Wilmington Partner for Launch Event

RALEIGH: The NC Department of Administration's Council for Women and Youth Involvement today unveiled the 2019 Status of Women in North Carolina: Health and Wellness Report at UNC Wilmington. This report is the second of four to be released by the Council in partnership with the Institute for Women's Policy Research to bring awareness to key issues affecting the lives of women in North Carolina.

The Department of Administration's (DOA) Secretary Machel Sanders joined Council Director Mary Williams-Stover and the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) Study Director Elyse Shaw at the university's College of Health & Human Services to provide a review of data and policy recommendations from the 2019 Health and Wellness report. The report provides detailed data analysis on North Carolina women and health issues relating to chronic disease, physical and sexual health, access to health care and sexual assault.

Data from the report shows that, while progress has been made in North Carolina since the inaugural release of the 2013 Status of Women in North Carolina report, there is still work to be done.

"We're seeing improvements in women's health but not for everyone. Many women face health challenges and barriers to health care, especially in our rural counties," said Secretary Machel Sanders. "Improving the health of women strengthens families, communities and our entire economy, and this report underscores the need to close the health insurance coverage gap."

Key findings from the report include:

- North Carolina ranks 11th highest in infant mortality and 9th highest in stroke mortality among women – and the problem is even worse in rural counties.
- North Carolina's mortality rates for heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and breast cancer, among other diseases, have decreased since the 2013 report.
- In North Carolina, more than one-third of women (35 percent) have experienced at least one type of intimate partner violence (IPV) and more than 35 percent of North Carolina

women report having experienced some form of aggression or control by an intimate partner.

- Among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, North Carolina ranks in the middle or bottom on indicators of health and wellness. North Carolina's best ranking is for heart disease mortality (27th out of 51) and its worst is for AIDS diagnoses (44th).
- There are wide disparities in North Carolina women's disease mortality rates by race and ethnicity. The heart disease rate among Black women in North Carolina is more than three times higher than the rate of Hispanic women, the racial and ethnic group with the lowest rate. Black women also have a rate of breast cancer mortality that is more than three times higher than the rate for Hispanic women.

Data from the report points out the need to increase access to health insurance and health care by expanding Medicaid, as championed by Governor Roy Cooper. More than 70 percent of North Carolina's counties are rural, and 57 percent of the state's workforce is comprised of women. Closing the health insurance coverage gap would bring \$4 billion into the state's economy, create thousands of jobs and expand access to health care for 500,000 people. This will bring tens of thousands of new jobs, help rural hospitals stay open, and ensure that North Carolinians are healthier.

"Women's health issues impact all of us, no matter our gender, region or race. This report is an important resource for decision makers, grantmakers and advocates and can help bring needed attention and action to make North Carolina the best place for women and families," said Council Director Mary Williams-Stover.

Wilmington is one of the first of many stops across the state to discuss the report and its findings. Event partner YWCA Lower Cape Fear has a long history of advocating for women and promoting health and wellness with 105 years of service to the community.

"Promoting the health and safety of women is integral to what we do at the YWCA," said Charrise Hart, YWCA Lower Cape Fear CEO. "We see significant benefits to the overall health and wellness of our community when we support women, but in order to realize those benefits, we must identify and work to eliminate the health disparities that exist for women in North Carolina. This report is a call to action, inviting our local and state agencies to join us in strengthening the health of all women in our state."

As follow up to today's event, leaders from the Council and DOA will embark on regional visits this fall to share the report findings and hear local community input on the status of women.

The Status of Women in NC report on Earnings & Employment was released in 2018. Future reports over the next two years will focus on poverty and opportunity, and political participation. More information is available at ncadmin.nc.gov/statusofwomennc2019.

About DOA

Established in 1957, the [Department of Administration](#) acts as the business manager for North Carolina state government. Under the leadership of Secretary Machel Sanders since appointed by Governor Roy Cooper in 2017, the department oversees Government Operations and advocacy programs. The department's advocacy programs provide advocacy, assistance and services to diverse segments of the state's population that have been traditionally underserved.

About CFWYI

[The North Carolina Council for Women and Youth Involvement](#) (CFYI) is a division of the North Carolina Department of Administration. The mission of the Council is to advise the Governor, state legislators and state leaders on issues that impact women and youth.

About IWPR

[The Institute for Women's Policy Research \(IWPR\)](#) is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization that conducts and communicates research to inspire public dialogue, shape policy, and improve the lives and opportunities of women of diverse backgrounds, circumstances, and experiences. IWPR also works in collaboration with the Program on Gender Analysis in Economics at American University.

About YWCA Lower Cape Fear

YWCA Lower Cape Fear is on a mission to eliminate racism, empower women, stand up for social justice, help families, and strengthen our community. YWCA Lower Cape Fear has a 105-year history in Wilmington and is part of an international movement serving over 2 million in the United States and 25 million worldwide. For comprehensive information about this important work, visit ywca-lowercapefear.org.

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