

# *Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis Joins Nationally-Funded Women's Economic Security Collaborative*

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## OUR MISSION

The Women's Economic Security Collaborative (WESC) is dedicated to increasing opportunity for low-income women through policy, advocacy, public education and grant making to organizations that use a gender lens to focus attention on the problem of poverty.

We bring together the work of four women's funds – the Chicago Foundation for Women, the Washington Area Women's Foundation, the Women's Foundation of California and the Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis, all members of the Women's Funding Network. We have more than 70 years experience among us, awarding grants totaling nearly \$49 million to programs and services that support the well-being of women and girls. Independently, we have worked to improve women's economic security through both local outreach and longer-term policy change on issues such as paid sick leave and others. Through our extensive connections as funders, we have the power and influence to bring together experts and advocates from across the political spectrum. Together, we intend to reframe the debate on improving our nation's economy to include greater support for programs and policies that create opportunity for low-income women and their children.

More than 56 percent of America's 37.3 million poor people are female. Of the nation's 12.8 million children living in poverty, 8.5 million are being raised in single-parent households – 89 percent of which are headed by women. We believe, and research has consistently shown, that helping these women move out of poverty is the most effective way to boost economic security for all struggling families.

## OUR GOALS

WESC focuses its efforts in three primary areas:

1. Increasing awareness among policy makers, opinion leaders and the public about how policy affects women's economic security;
2. Creating, strengthening and protecting policies and practices that support the ability of women and their children to achieve economic security;
3. Demonstrating the value of women's funds in efforts to reduce poverty.

## OUR ACTIVITIES

In 2009 and 2010 WESC will expand its reach and influence through a variety of efforts, including:

- ♦ Research projects that examine the effects of current policy on single female-headed households and present ideas for moving women out of poverty, such as a poverty impact statement that would show the consequences of a given policy on women's economic security. The research would be released to the media, provided to policymakers via national and local briefings, and used to shape the policy debate.
- ♦ A series of policy meetings and forums that bring together our extensive network of opinion leaders ranging from local advocates to national experts and policy makers.
- ♦ Active engagement of women's funds in poverty-reduction efforts at conferences hosted by the Women's Funding Network and other groups, as well as through presentations and work sessions at the local level.



## IN MEMPHIS

Locally, the Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis has partnered with advocacy and research organizations with specific expertise and missions that align with the goals of the Collaborative. The Memphis Area Women's Council, organized to influence and change policies for the benefit of Shelby County women in the areas of health, education and economic self-sufficiency, serves the project coordinator, and The Center for Research on Women at the University of Memphis will develop and analyze localized research to uncover impact of poverty and policy on local women.

Over the past six months we've convened over 100 representatives from various sectors of the community including administrators, non-profit organizations, health and government to inform them about the national project and local goals. This group discussed past efforts to address poverty, current community challenges and initiatives underway to provide supportive services to help people in poverty or to foster policy solutions. Additionally, a poverty impact survey was conducted online, in workshops and by mail, securing over 200 responses.

Participants were asked to rank the community issues of unemployment, public education, taxes, crime, poverty and race relations and the policy areas of education, health/mental health, employment, housing, childcare and criminal background. The results of this unscientific ranking were:

- ♦ **Public education**, literacy and skills training were ranked No. 1 by most participants.
- ♦ **Poverty** tied with public education as a leading local policy issue, followed by unemployment and crime.
- ♦ **Employment** and **Health/Mental Health** ranked No. 2 and No. 3 as local policy challenges.

The Women's Economic Security Collaborative has established national and local advisory councils, comprised of policy experts, elected officials, philanthropic leaders, researchers and community representatives, to provide input and feedback on our research and guide our public education advocacy efforts.

## WESC LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**Ruby Bright**, Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis | **Dr. David Ciscel**, Christian Brothers University | **Deborah Clubb**, Memphis Area Women's Council | **Congressman Steve Cohen**, U. S. House of Representatives | **Margaret Craddock**, Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association | **The Honorable Lois M. DeBerry**, Tennessee House of Representatives | **Commissioner Tomeka Hart**, Memphis City Schools Board of Commissioners, Memphis Urban League Inc. | **Meg Jones**, Community Legal Center | **Reverend Rebekah Jordan**, Mid-South Interfaith Network for Economic Justice | **Robert Lipscomb**, Memphis Housing Authority and the Division of Housing and Community Development | **Yvonne Madlock**, Memphis & Shelby County Health Department | **Commissioner Deidre D. Malone**, Shelby County Commission | **TaJuan Stout Mitchell**, City of Memphis | **Renee McCreight**, Bridges, Inc. | **Eva Mosby**, Department of Human Services | **Jim Russell**, Workforce Investment Network | **Dr. Lynda M. Sagrestano**, Center for Research on Women, University of Memphis | **Laura Seidell**, Seedco | **Susan Stephenson**, Independent Bank | **Regina Walker**, United Way of the Mid-South | **Sonja White**, Memphis Area Legal Services | **Archie Willis, III**, Community Capital | **Linda Williams**, Rise Foundation



WOMEN'S  
FUNDING  
NETWORK

Founded in 1985, the Women's Funding Network is a worldwide partnership of 126 women's and girls' funds, foundations and other philanthropic organizations committed to changing society by improving the status of women and girls locally, nationally and globally.

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