



MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN MINUTES

April 23, 2025, 6:30 PM
Cutler Ridge Elementary School
20210 SW Coral Sea Road, Cutler Bay, Fl. 33189

1. Call to Order

Chair Michelle Abreu called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. She welcomed attendees and expressed gratitude to the Town of Cutler Bay and Cutler Ridge Elementary School for hosting the Commission's inaugural *On the Road* meeting.

2. Roll Call

Each board member introduced themselves and stated the district they represent.

Board Members Present:

Michelle Abreu **Chairwoman**, Lourdes Abadin **Vice Chairwoman**, Clora Adkins, Heather Paschal Binns, Mercedes Carlson, Milagros "Millie" Del Valle **2nd Vice Chair**, Katherine Leiva, **Member at Large**, Marie Souerette-Eloi, **Member at Large**, Dr. Sharon Kendrick-Johnson, Nadege Vilsaint, Gloria Martinez, Lunicel Alvarado, Yumanela Candelaria, Gabby Carey-Johnson, Elise Gerson, Yama Paillere

Excused Absent: Yvette Ayala, Dr. Jacqueline Pena, Chelsea Granell, Josephine Novo, Maria Santamaria

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved as presented. A motion was made by Mercedes and seconded by Luni. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Public Comment and Recognitions

Chair Abreu opened the floor for public recognitions.

Special acknowledgments were given to:

- **Girl Scouts of Tropical Florida**, including Alexandra O'Keefe and Caroline Willems, and **Daisy Troop 2513**
- **Principal Wright-Mullins** of Cutler Ridge Elementary for hosting
- The **female Deputy Honor Guard** from the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office
- All community members and organizational partners present

Public Comments:

- **Mariana Lopez** from the ACLU of Florida shared information about the RAISE.IS program. She encouraged attendees to use the anonymous hotline or website to report ICE presence and request legal support, noting that free legal representation is available through the ACLU's immigration advocacy efforts.
- **Lorena** from the **South Florida Military Veterans Expo** discussed the Expo's mission to connect veterans with critical services and highlighted upcoming events.



- **Julie Robison** from the **South Dade Women Veterans Alliance** promoted their June 12th event “*Women Are Veterans Too*” and thanked the Commission for its ongoing partnership.
- **Jen Feliz** from **G.O.D. (Guidance, Outreach, Development) Advocates** described their programs for mentorship, tutoring, and job skills development for youth in foster care and high-risk communities.
- **Lucia Sorrell** of the **South Dade Chamber of Commerce** discussed the Chamber’s activities and invited the Commission to its *Ladies of Legacy* event.
- **Dr. Belinda Leon**, Executive Director of **Women of Tomorrow**, shared insights about their mentorship program for at-risk high school girls in the Tri-County area.
- **Mia Devane**, liaison from the **Office of the Mayor**, addressed recent public concerns about fluoride, affirming the Mayor’s position that fluoride is safe and should remain in the water supply.
- A **WomenHeart Advocate** briefly shared about **WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease**, emphasizing their work in patient education, peer support, and advocacy to improve women’s heart health.
- **Khristal Gooding** from the **Miami-Dade County Public Schools’ Office of Intergovernmental Affairs** highlighted the office’s role in supporting families, offering mentorship, and responding to community inquiries.
- A representative from **State Representative Omar Blanco’s office** greeted attendees and affirmed their support for community-based initiatives.
- A second representative from the **Girl Scouts of Tropical Florida** emphasized their interest in partnering with the Commission on a *Status of Girls* report and introduced a new women’s troop available for those interested in adult engagement.

5. Special Presentations

Certificates of Appreciation were presented to **four female deputies** of the Miami-Dade Sheriff’s Office Honor Guard, in recognition of their service and support of a recent Commission event. Presentations were led by Chair Michelle Abreu and Vice Chair Lourdes Abadin.

Following the recognitions, **Hannah Keime** of **Heart Charged** delivered a three-minute presentation. *Heart Charged* is an organization committed to raising awareness of cardiac arrest in youth and women through education, advocacy, and access to life-saving tools like AEDs.

6. Director’s Report

Dr. Rose Martin, Director of the Commission, shared ongoing efforts to present the 2024 *Status of Women Report* to various stakeholders across Miami-Dade County. She highlighted her collaboration with the **University of Miami School of Law’s Human Rights Clinic** to ensure that future recommendations are data-backed, community-informed, and sustainably designed. Dr. Martin is actively seeking input from organizations and agencies already addressing gender-based disparities to strengthen community buy-in and validate the Commission’s work before finalizing policy recommendations.

She also noted that she is currently disaggregating the Status of Women data by zip code and commission district to present personalized insights to each of the 13 County Commissioners. Board member **Gloria** requested that the Director share this disaggregated data with all board members, allowing them to better understand the challenges in the districts they represent and to more effectively engage with their respective Commissioners and local partners.



Dr. Martin reported that she has already met with **Commissioner Bermudez** and that he expressed interest in hosting a **public forum in collaboration with Miami Dade College**. The forum would provide an opportunity for local feedback and discussion around efforts in his district to address the disparities outlined in the report. She is awaiting follow-up responses from other Commissioners' offices regarding meeting availability.

7. Old Business

a. Women's Hall of Fame

Applications for the 2025 Women's Hall of Fame open **May 1** and close **May 31**. The Executive Committee will review and shortlist 10 nominees, which will then be presented to the full board. The board will vote on no fewer than five nominees to be submitted to the Board of County Commissioners for final approval.

Vice Chair Lourdes Abadin inquired about the eligibility criteria. Dr. Martin clarified that the Hall of Fame recognizes women who have made significant, countywide impact—not just in their local communities.

b. Young Women's Preparatory Academy Scholarship

The application period opened **April 1** and closes **May 1, 2025**. To date, only one application has been received. Dr. Martin noted that this is consistent with past years and explained that many students apply closer to the deadline due to the school's small class size of around 20 students.

Board member **Yama** shared that, based on her experience working with youth, it is typical for students to prioritize academics and testing during this time of year and wait until the last moment to apply. Member-at-Large **Leiva** suggested that the board consult with the school district to identify best practices around scholarship timelines and explore whether an earlier or later application window would better serve students.

Dr. Martin also stated that, should only one application be submitted, the board will need to vote on whether to award the full \$3,000 (previously allocated for three \$1,000 scholarships) to a single recipient.

c. Exploring Grants through the Office of Management and Budget

Dr. Martin explained that there is no precedent for the Commission receiving grant funds from the County's Office of Management and Budget, given its status as a government advisory board rather than a nonprofit. She reminded members that individual commissioners may allocate discretionary funding for specific initiatives and encouraged board members to explore that route when applicable.

8. New Business

a. Citizens' Independent Transportation Trust (CITT) Presentation

The CITT is scheduled to present at the Commission for Women meeting on **Wednesday, September 24, 2025**.

b. 2024 Source of Income Statement Filing

Dr. Martin reminded all members who served at any point in 2024 that they are required to submit the 2024 Source of Income Statement by **July 1, 2025**.

She clarified that board members are only required to list the source and address of income—not the specific



dollar amounts. She read the names of members who have already submitted their forms and urged others to submit promptly to avoid delays.

Dr. Martin shared a cautionary tale of a board member from a separate advisory body who was removed for submitting the form after the deadline, resulting in a reappointment process that required retaking the oath of office. Filing instructions are included on the second page of the form. Members were asked to copy her on submission emails for tracking.

c. Disability Resource Fair (District 13)

A proposal was presented to host a **Disability Resource Fair** in District 13, focused on supporting mothers and caregivers of individuals with disabilities. Board members expressed interest but decided to **table the vote** until the next meeting due to limited details. The item will be added to the May agenda.

d. May On the Road Meeting – Location Confirmation

The board confirmed that the next *On the Road* meeting will be held on **Wednesday, May 28 at 6:30 PM** in the **Town of Miami Lakes**. The exact location is still pending and will be shared once finalized.

e. Human Trafficking Forum

Board members discussed the possibility of hosting a **Human Trafficking Awareness Forum** but ultimately decided such an event would be best held separately, outside of the monthly board meeting structure. It was suggested that **Doral** could be a potential host city, particularly given the Mayor of Doral's interest in partnering with the Commission for Women on an event.

9. Announcements

Board members engaged in discussion regarding the success of the inaugural *On the Road* meeting format. Many expressed enthusiasm for continuing to hold meetings in different regions of the County to increase accessibility and engagement.

Specific interest was noted in hosting future meetings in **Miami Gardens** and **Aventura**, with board members actively exploring venue options. The board also emphasized the importance of consistently partnering with **local community organizations** to participate and present during meetings, reinforcing the value of **community buy-in** and deepening local impact.

10. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:15pm by Chair Michelle Abreu.