



Illinois Council on Women and Girls

2025 Mid-Year Report

June 1, 2025

To the residents of the State of Illinois,

As we approach the mid-way point of 2025, the Illinois Council on Women and Girls (the “Council”) is pleased to reflect on the progress we have made thus far. This letter serves as a mid-year report per 20 ILCS 5130/30. Our Council has several initiatives we are working on through our subcommittees.

In alignment with my office’s *We Thrive* initiative (centered around ensuring women and girls throughout Illinois have the resources and tools they need to be financially fit, informed, and independent), the Council’s Health and Healthcare subcommittee has begun to focus on menopause and perimenopause. The health and economic impacts that accompany this stage of a woman’s life are often overlooked. In fact, 73% of women are not treated for their menopause symptoms at all, which leads to unnecessary health risks and economic burdens. The long-term effects of untreated perimenopause and menopause include higher risks for cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, Alzheimer’s, and diabetes. It is estimated that about \$150 billion is lost globally each year due to menopause symptoms affecting worker productivity. As such, we have made this topic a main focus of the Council’s subcommittee. We are working directly with the University of Illinois Chicago Health’s Dr. Pauline Maki, a leader in this field, who has joined our subcommittee. We are also working with actress Halle Berry and her organization, Re*spin. In March, we co-hosted an event titled “The Menopause Imperative: Making Illinois a Leader in Care,” which brought together women leaders (including many legislators) to talk about impacts and possible solutions.

The Council wrote a bipartisan Joint Resolution to declare October 12th-18th as the first Menopause Awareness Week in Illinois. Senate Joint Resolution 0025 was adopted by both chambers of the General Assembly on May 30, 2025. Partnering with Halle Berry’s organization, Dr. Maki, and Women Employed, we are in the process of planning events during that week and an informational campaign about the impacts of menopause. We are also researching potential legislative and policy changes that can improve women’s lives as they navigate this period of life.

Also, in conjunction with the *We Thrive* Initiative, the Gender Based Violence subcommittee is working on ways to make the path towards financial freedom easier for survivors. Financial abuse occurs in almost all abusive relationships and is one of the leading reasons why people stay with an abuser. In Europe, there are banks that offer special accounts with extra protections for domestic violence victims. We are in the beginning stages of partnering with a bank to launch a pilot program here in Illinois that mirrors the model abroad. We are hoping to launch by the end of the year.

Our second cohort of the Girls Lead program, led by our Leadership and Inclusion subcommittee, is in full swing. This year, we decided to grow the program in several different ways. First, we significantly expanded the number of girls we accepted into the program by expanding our pool of mentors. Rather than only matching girls with women legislators, as we did in our pilot year, we widened the criteria for mentors to include any senior level women leaders within state government. We had 74 women step up to participate. These women included legislators, chiefs of staff, agency directors, policy and legislative directors, and more. Due to this, we were able to accept 84 (from over 450 applications!) girls into the program. These participants are spread throughout Illinois, representing 28 counties. It has been incredible to hear about the great experiences- both from mentees and mentors- throughout the program.

We also selected our new Girls Committee. This year, we requested nominations and received over 150 for about 25 spots. The selected group of young women committed to serving as Council subcommittee for one calendar year. They meet regularly in addition to attending Council meetings. They will be picking a topic that they feel is important to young people and spend the remainder of the year researching and writing their own policy proposals. During the last Council meeting of the year, they will present their recommendations. We love having young voices in the room with us.

The Council is incredibly passionate and driven. Despite the chaos and confrontation spilling out from the current climate at the federal level, this Council is more dedicated than ever to making Illinois the best place for women and girls.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Juliana Stratton".

Juliana Stratton
Lieutenant Governor
State of Illinois