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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

Lt. Governor Molly Gray Hosts “Seat at the Table” on The Economic Well-Being of Vermont Women

Montpelier, Vt. — Today, on International Women’s Day, Lt. Governor Gray hosted her third “Seat at the Table” on the economic well-being of Vermont women. International Women’s Day is a day aimed at recognizing the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women.

"Vermont women are in economic crisis. While there is much to celebrate today -- the first female vice president of the United States and more women in elected office here in Vermont -- this last year and this pandemic, has exposed the persistent economic crisis facing Vermont women at a disproportionate national rate.," said Gray, "In November, Vermont women filed 73% of unemployment claims - the highest percentage of any state in the nation."

Panelists presented existing data and discussed policy changes and initiatives necessary to address the short-term and long-term economic needs of Vermont women as Vermont prepares for federal relief funds. Over 130 community leaders and policymakers joined the “Seat at the Table”.

Speakers included Xusana Davis, the Executive Director of Racial Equity for the State of Vermont, Cary Brown, the Executive Director of Vermont Commission on Women, Jessica Nordhaus, the Director of Change the Story VT, and Meg Smith, the Director of the Vermont Women's Fund. Lt. Governor Gray moderated the conversation.

Meg Smith of the Vermont Women’s Fund said, “We (the VT Women’s Fund) are addressing childcare and women’s business ownership and entrepreneurship as key building blocks in Vermont’s economic recovery. With affordable, available childcare, women can operate in the workforce and provide for their families. And women business owners are an untapped resource with the power to be economic drivers for Vermont. It won’t take much to unleash that potential!”

The State of Vermont Director of Racial Equity, Xusana Davis, expressed the need to “make equity assessment second nature,” and that finding solutions “requires trusting that marginalized people know what they need and asking people what they need to make them whole, and giving them agency.”

Cary Brown of the Vermont Commission on Women started the panel by [sharing important data](#) collected by the Commission on women in Vermont and encouraging policymakers to make strategic investments in childcare as well as paid family and medical leave. Brown stated, “by improving childcare and workforce development, we can come out of the pandemic better than we were before.”

Jessica Nordhaus of Change the Story VT noted that more data on the impact of COVID-19 on Vermont women will be available in the weeks ahead, “In December 2019, Change The Story released our most comprehensive report about women’s economic status: [Women, Work and Wages in Vermont](#). This year, we’ve teamed up with researchers at UMass Amherst to conduct a survey of over 500 Vermonters about the gendered impacts of COVID-19, which builds on our previous research. The new findings will be shared over the next several months. So far, we know the top three resources respondents said could help right now are direct cash payments, greater mental health supports, and better access to internet and technology.”

A recording of the event is available to view on YouTube here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZB7Vyy17uk&t=30s>

Vermonters wishing to attend future sessions, can register, and find additional information here:
<https://ltgov.vermont.gov/seatatthetable>.

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