


Nykia R. Leach, MPH



February 23, 2025

Somerville Commission for Women
Department of Racial and Social Justice
167 Holland Street, Suite 208,
Somerville, MA 02144

Dear Steven Flythe, Deputy Director,

I am writing to express my interest in joining the Somerville Commission for Women. As a resident of East Somerville since 2021, I am deeply committed to advancing equity, access, and education in both my personal and professional life. With a Master of Public Health from Brown University and a background in public health research, policy, and program implementation, I have dedicated my career to leading initiatives that improve community health, expand educational access, and foster civic engagement. The Commission's commitment to advocacy, education, and outreach for women's rights and equity aligns closely with my experience and passion, inspiring me to apply for this opportunity to contribute to my city.

Throughout my career, I have managed large-scale public health and research grants focused on health equity and community-based programming. Most recently, I oversaw Boston Public Schools' \$3.2 million, five-year CDC Division of Adolescent and School Health grant, supporting initiatives that promoted inclusivity, sexual health education, and access to health services. I cultivated and managed partnerships at both national and local levels, securing contracts and memorandums of understanding with organizations such as the Boston Public Health Commission and Advocates for Youth. Additionally, I collaborated with the Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement, BPS' Office of Health Services, and MassNOW to expand access to free menstrual products and education across the city. From school bathrooms to city libraries, this initiative underscored my ability to build coalitions that drive meaningful policy change. During my time at BPS, I also served on the District Wellness Council Health Education Committee for four years and was an active member of the JUICE (Joy-Unity-Inclusion-Collaboration-Equity) Committee for two years.

Earlier in my career, I worked in sexual and interpersonal violence prevention—an urgent public health issue that disproportionately affects women. As a Clinical Research Assistant at Rhode Island Hospital, I contributed to a grant-funded study evaluating the efficacy of a local nonprofit's violence prevention curriculum. From 2019 to 2021, I worked as a Program Officer for Willows International, an NGO that expands access to reproductive health services through community-based education and counseling. In this role, I provided technical support and conducted monitoring and evaluation for programs in Ghana, Tanzania, Pakistan, and Turkey. I also strengthened Willows' long-standing partnerships with local ministries of health, reinforcing the importance of collaboration in advancing gender equity on a global scale.

As an adjunct instructor at Wheaton College and Simmons University, I integrate discussions on gender, health disparities, and social justice into my public health and education courses. My professional and academic experiences have consistently centered on gender equity, social and reproductive justice, and community empowerment. As a first-generation college graduate who grew up in poverty, I am also deeply interested in the intersection of financial literacy and empowerment. This passion has shaped my professional pursuits, ensuring that underserved communities have access to critical health and education resources. Having managed numerous partnerships with community organizations and schools, I am adept at coalition-building—an essential skill in advancing gender equity initiatives.

In 2019, I was hired by the Womxn Project to protect access to safe and legal abortion in Rhode Island through education, art, and advocacy. I designed a postcard campaign, led phone-banking nights, and, as a constituent, testified at the State House on proposed legislation. In 2020, my research on the health and socioeconomic impacts of abortion denial was published in the Rhode Island Medical Journal.

With a more flexible schedule, I am eager to deepen my community engagement through volunteerism. I am fully able to commit to at least five hours per month and actively participate in all meetings and initiatives. I welcome the opportunity to discuss my qualifications further and appreciate your time and consideration.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nykia Leach". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nykia" and last name "Leach" clearly distinguishable.

Nykia R. Leach