

## **Program: April 2022**

### **School-to-Prison Pipeline**

On April 24<sup>th</sup>, AAUW Alexandria and AAUW Mt. Vernon held a forum called “Impact of School-to-Prison Pipeline: Restorative Justice as a Less Punitive Approach”. The speakers were Parisa Dehghani-Tafti, Commonwealth Attorney for Arlington and Falls Church and Dr. Kevin Gilbert, the Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for the Howard County School System. He has also been the Vice President for Governance for the National Council of State Education Associations, chair of the NEA Committee on Human and Civil Rights and co-chair of the NeA task force on Discipline and the School To Prison Pipeline. She has litigated at the US Supreme Court and the Virginia Supreme Court. Among the many issues that were discussed on this complex topic were the fact that increasing numbers of black girls are going to jail and that the majority of all children arrested are black. A major arrest charge is general disturbance, a meaningless phrase that can be twisted. Children are arrested for things that adults wouldn't even be sanctioned for, i.e. tardiness or talking or having a cell phone out. Studies have shown that these arrests often lead to other problems, like not finishing school and losing opportunities that other kids can get, as in scholarships. Other techniques, such as restorative justice instead of jail, having the punishment be appropriate for the action, and diversion techniques to prevent the problem are very helpful and also reduce the recidivism rate dramatically.