



## ADVANCE WORKPLACE EQUALITY IN YOUR STATE

Too many working families are struggling just to make ends meet. And discriminatory and unfair workplace practices create an uneven playing field and make it that much harder for working people—particularly women—to keep a job, to put food on the table, to make decisions about whether or not to have children, and to care for their families.

Working families are looking for advocates and legislators to advance policies that create a fairer workplace and promote an economy that works for all of us. Working women are particularly concerned about economic stability, ranking equal pay and affordable/guaranteed health care for all as top issues for action in recent national polls.

### Working Women and Families Need Policies That Will Work for Them

Workplace discrimination based on factors such as a person's sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, disability, familial status, or (often) a combination of these, stands in the way of equal opportunity and economic stability. Employers still too often discriminate against women, particularly women of color and mothers, paying them less or forcing them out of jobs. They steer women towards particular types of jobs, pass women over for opportunities for advancement or promotion based on discriminatory stereotypes about women's ability or commitment to the job, or deny women comprehensive benefits on par with their male counterparts.

Families rely on women's earnings. When women are paid less than their male counterparts, are denied advancement, or lose or are forced to leave a job, they and their families face not only an immediate loss of income but potentially years of decreased earnings, job stability, and economic security.

A legislative agenda to address workplace equality will significantly improve working people's lives. In addition, more

equitable workplaces will produce bottom line benefits for business including reduced workforce turnover, more diversity, and increased employee satisfaction and productivity. These policies will also benefit the broader economy by enhancing the buying power of women and their families, and harnessing the full potential, talent, and productivity of the workforce.

Policies that will work together to combat workplace discrimination and promote the economic security of working people and their families include:

**Ending Discrimination Because of a Person's Reproductive Health Decisions:** Everyone should be able to make the decision about whether, when, and how to have children that is best for them, without fear of unfair consequences at work. But across the country, women are being punished, threatened, or fired by their employers for using birth control, for having or contemplating an abortion, for undergoing in vitro fertilization in order to get pregnant, or for having sex without being married. This type of discrimination undermines a woman's ability to make the decision about starting or growing a family that is best for her, and threatens her health, wellbeing, and her and her family's long term economic security. States can step up to protect working people from this harm by specifically prohibiting employers from taking adverse actions against their employees because of an employee's reproductive health decision.

**Ensuring Pregnant Workers Are Treated Fairly:** No woman should have to choose between a healthy pregnancy and keeping her job. Some pregnant workers need temporary accommodations to continue working safely throughout pregnancy, but employers frequently deny even minor accommodations, such as being permitted to sit down during a long shift or drink water at a work station—forcing many pregnant workers to choose between the health of their pregnancies and the job that provides their families economic security. States can ensure that pregnant workers can continue to do their jobs and support their families by requiring employers to make the same sorts of reasonable



accommodations for medical needs arising out of pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions that employers are required to make for disabilities.

**Ending Discriminatory Pay Practices:** When women are paid less than their male counterparts, their smaller paychecks have long-lasting repercussions for their housing, education, health, and retirement. The wage gap for women of color and mothers is particularly staggering, and sets these working women and their families back years, oftentimes decades, in achieving economic stability. States must help level the playing field for working women by strengthening pay discrimination laws through measures such as prohibiting employers from relying on salary history in setting pay, promoting pay transparency, closing loopholes that make it harder for employees to prevail in equal pay claims, and fully compensating victims of pay discrimination.

**Ensuring Employer-Sponsored Insurance Meets Women's Needs:** A woman's ability to plan and space her pregnancies through access to birth control is linked to her greater educational and professional opportunities and increased lifetime earnings. And children whose mothers had access to birth control have higher family incomes and college completion rates. Yet too many employers are discriminating against female employees by denying them comprehensive health insurance coverage that includes birth control without cost sharing. When employees are denied coverage of birth control, costs often lead women to forego birth control completely, choose less effective methods, or use it inconsistently or incorrectly, increasing the risk for an unintended pregnancy. States should ensure that all working people, regardless of where they work or how they are insured, have coverage of the full range of birth control methods without cost sharing.

**The National Women's Law Center can help you craft a legislative agenda that is specifically tailored to your state. NWLC can:**

- Provide research to identify specific needs or gaps in policies;
- Assist in crafting legislation;
- Provide state level data analysis;
- Help connect you with other advocates, legislators, and experts; and/or
- Create supporting resources including:
  - o Sample graphics and tweets;
  - o Talking points; and
  - o Fact sheets.

**If you are interested in pursuing a policy agenda in your state, please contact the National Women's Law Center by e-mail at [roadmap@nwlc.org](mailto:roadmap@nwlc.org) or by phone at: 202-588-5180.**

