



## Promoting an Economic Security Agenda for Ohio Women and Families

The Ohio Women's Public Policy Network is a coalition unlike any other group in the state. Formed in 2015 and convened by Innovation Ohio Education Fund, we bring together more than 30 organizations to collaboratively advance policies that create economic security for women and strengthen Ohio families. Using a collective voice that represents the women of our state, the network works to ensure that public policy reflects the true needs of women and families.

Over the last few decades, women have made great strides in workforce participation and educational attainment. However, women – particularly women of color – still face substantial barriers to achieving economic self-sufficiency and are more likely than men to remain at risk of economic insecurity at all stages of their lives. Workplace policies have not kept pace with the changing dynamics of the American workforce and often fail to reflect the multi-faceted role that many women play as both caregivers and breadwinners for their families. Ohio lacks many foundational policies that would promote full economic prosperity and opportunity for women – holding back women, families, and our state as a whole.

**Equity is pivotal to our mission as a coalition and should remain a fundamental consideration in all policy creation. We recognize that, historically, our country's laws and policies have reinforced and perpetuated gender discrimination, structural and institutional racism, and bias against marginalized communities. The Women's Public Policy Network is dedicated to confronting and addressing these barriers by working to advance policies that create fair opportunity and equal prosperity for women and their families.**

**We are united by a shared vision for Ohio in which all women - particularly women of color and other marginalized women - have the resources to thrive and opportunity to lead economically secure, safe, and healthy lives. In order to make a meaningful impact, policymakers must advance public policies centered in equity, fairness, and justice that address the following issue areas:**

1. **Promoting economic security for women and families**
2. **Ensuring fairness and opportunity in the workplace**
3. **Improving women's health and well-being**

**The members of the Women's Public Policy Network, listed below, are committed to working to implement these and other pro-women policies at the state and local levels:**

ACLU of Ohio	Women, Central Ohio Chapter	Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio
ACTION OHIO	National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Chapter	Policy Matters Ohio
American Association of University Women of Ohio	Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence	ProgressOhio
Catholics for Choice	Ohio Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW)	Restoring Our Own Through Transformation (ROOTT)
Children's Defense Fund - Ohio	Ohio Domestic Violence Network	The Women's Fund of Central Ohio
Closing the Women's Wealth Gap	Ohio Federation of Teachers	The Women's Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation
Hadassah Columbus Innovation Ohio Education Fund	Ohio NOW	UHCAN Ohio
Jobs with Justice, Cleveland Chapter	Ohio Progressive Asian Women's Leadership	URGE
Juvenile Justice Coalition	Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice	YWCA Columbus
NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio	Ohio Urban Resources Systems (O.U.R.S.)	YWCA Dayton
National Coalition of 100 Black		YWCA Greater Cincinnati

## PROMOTING ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR WOMEN

Women regularly face economic barriers, including disproportionate representation in low-security and low-wage jobs. Despite having slightly higher levels of educational attainment than men, women are more likely to hold a part-time job, work for minimum wage, and live in poverty. In Ohio, nearly seven in ten minimum wage workers are women, and women of color represent a disproportionate share of these workers – particularly Black women who are overrepresented in three of the nation’s lowest wage-earning, highest growth jobs (personal care aides, food preparation/servers, and home health aides).<sup>1</sup> Women make up nearly three-quarters (74.8 percent) of the tipped wage workforce in Ohio; receiving less stable pay and experiencing a poverty rate that is twice as high as the rate for other workers.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, women are more likely to take on caregiving duties for children or sick family members, but only 15 percent of workers – and only four percent of low-wage workers – have access to any form of paid leave through their employers. Black and Latina women are even less likely to have access to paid leave, which exacerbates the wealth gaps and racial disparities among families of color and white families.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the average annual cost of infant care in Ohio is \$8,977, which is estimated to take up 15.1 percent of the average Ohio family’s income for one child.<sup>4</sup>

Women’s systemic labor market barriers threaten their economic security and that of their families, at a time when women play an increasingly integral role in securing their families’ livelihood: women are the sole, primary, or co-breadwinner in roughly two-thirds (67 percent) of all families in Ohio. Looking across racial groups, 85 percent of Black mothers, 62 percent of Latina mothers, and 53 percent of White mothers are key family breadwinners. However, as much as 32 percent of the more than 587,000 Ohio households headed by women had incomes below the poverty level in 2017.<sup>5</sup> Single mothers, women of color, and elderly women living alone are particularly vulnerable to living in poverty. The Ohio Women’s Public Policy Network advocates for policies that promote women’s economic security, such as:

- Increase the minimum wage and eliminate the tipped wage
- Improve the state earned income tax credit to benefit more working women
- Increase access to paid family and medical leave and paid sick days
- Increase affordability of child care and expand public preschool
- Ensure pension protection and retirement security
- Increase access to affordable housing and housing security

## ENSURING FAIRNESS AND OPPORTUNITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Women’s workforce participation has increased 35 percent since the early 1970s and, in Ohio, women now make up nearly half (48 percent) of the state’s workforce. As many families increasingly depend upon the wages of working mothers, women are remaining in their jobs longer into their pregnancies and staying in the workforce at higher rates after childbirth than ever before. Despite this increased participation in the workforce, women, particularly those working in the low-wage workforce, continue to face barriers to keeping their employment or advancing in their careers due to outdated workplace policies or workplace discrimination.

Pregnancy discrimination, such as being forced out of a job or denied reasonable accommodations while pregnant, affects women across race and ethnicity, but women of color and immigrant women may be at elevated risk due to their disproportionate representation among jobs with less flexibility, fewer legal protections, and greater physical demands. Unfair or discriminatory hiring practices, among other factors, contribute to the gender and

racial wage gaps, which prevent women and their families from reaching their full economic potential. In Ohio, the gap is slightly larger than the national average with women typically earning just 75 cents for every dollar men make, totaling an annual wage gap of \$12,686. Pay disparities are even larger for women of color working in Ohio who face racial and gender pay inequities: On average, Black women are paid 64 cents and Latinas are paid 61 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.<sup>6</sup> Failing to provide equal pay not only impacts women's paychecks, but also has longer term impacts on women's wealth attainment, investment, and retirement savings.

Women disproportionately experience domestic violence and sexual harassment and violence - issues that not only affect the health and safety of women, but also permeate into the workforce by affecting productivity, jeopardizing the safety of victims and co-workers, and increasing absenteeism and employee turnover. Research estimates that the average lifetime cost of intimate partner violence for women is \$103,767.<sup>7</sup> Women of color and immigrant women are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment and assault in the workplace as they are overrepresented in lower-wage industries, which have stark power imbalances and meager legal protections. The Women's Public Policy Network promotes the following policies to ensure fairness and opportunity in the workplace:

- Ensure pay equity for all women by protecting against pay discrimination on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, age, or disability
- Promote fair and flexible work schedules
- Protect the rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively for fair wages, benefits, and working conditions
- Support nursing mothers in the workplace
- Protect against discrimination on the basis of pregnancy or caregiver status
- Eliminate barriers to employment and career advancement, particularly for formerly incarcerated women
- Promote opportunities for women to advance and excel in the business and entrepreneurial sector
- Prevent and address sexual harassment and violence in the workplace
- Protect against discrimination in housing or the workplace on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity
- Protect against discrimination in housing and the workplace against survivors of sexual and domestic violence

## **IMPROVING WOMEN'S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

Without access to adequate, comprehensive health care and treatment, the goal of economic security is cut short before it begins - but affordable coverage and care are out of reach for many. Seven percent of Ohio women between the ages of 19 and 64 lack health insurance altogether; and women of color are more likely to be uninsured, which presents barriers to accessing preventive and primary health care and contributes to persistent health disparities, such as higher rates of diabetes, pregnancy-related complications, and cervical and breast cancer than white women.<sup>8</sup> Black women also face disproportionately higher rates of pregnancy-related deaths. The United States is the most dangerous developed nation in the world for women to give birth, and Ohio faces a maternal mortality rate above the national average. Nationally, Black women are three to four times

more likely to die from pregnancy-related deaths compared to white women as a result of racial disparities in access to and quality of care; discrimination and implicit bias in the health care system experienced before, during, and after pregnancy; and stress and trauma associated with structural and institutional racism.<sup>9</sup>

Medicaid has long been a lifeline for women, especially women in rural areas of the country. In Ohio, women compose more than half (58 percent) of the state's Medicaid population, and nationally, Medicaid covers more than 50 percent of births, playing a critical role in maternal care and health outcomes for babies.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, due to prohibitive cost barriers for women without insurance coverage, research demonstrates there are some low-income women in Ohio who are less likely to seek necessary medical care or have lower rates of accessing preventive services when compared to low-income women with insurance coverage. As a result of increased health care utilization for physical and mental health needs, health care costs can be even higher for women who have experienced physical or sexual abuse, and these elevated costs can continue for years after the incident of abuse.

Although many women presently rely on reproductive health services, ideological legislative agendas have impeded access to abortion and other reproductive health care services, and access is not distributed evenly. Restrictions to abortion access in Ohio disproportionately hurt women of color, low-income women, and women living in rural areas. Access to contraception and abortion care is directly linked to women's educational attainment, workforce participation, and economic security. Women who are denied an abortion are three times more likely to live in poverty two years later, compared to women of similar earning potential who were able to obtain an abortion.<sup>11</sup> Women of color, and especially Black women, are disproportionately likely to be denied or unable to access resources, services, and information related to their reproductive health, which prevents them from experiencing maximum health, wellbeing, and birth outcomes. The Women's Public Policy Network believes that women have a right to choose their own health care options and advocates for policies that improve women's health and well-being, such as:

- Preserve access to and increase affordability of comprehensive health care for low- and middle-income women
- Address barriers to behavioral and mental health treatment
- Protect against cultural, social, racial, and ethnic barriers for obtaining healthcare services
- Protect the health and safety of incarcerated women and girls
- Improve maternal health outcomes and address maternal health inequity, particularly for Black mothers who face higher rates of maternal mortality and morbidity
- Prevent lawmakers and employers from interfering in health care decisions
- Restore and protect access to reproductive health care services, including contraception and abortion
- Ensure the physical and mental health needs of survivors of sexual and domestic violence are met without cost to the survivor; the crimes against them investigated and prosecuted; and perpetrators of such crimes are held accountable
- Support and invest in programs that address and prevent sexual and domestic violence, such as healthy relationship education
- Create new protections for survivors of sexual abuse, domestic violence, and stalking

<sup>1</sup>National Women's Law Center (2018, August). Fact Sheet: Low-Wage Jobs Held Primarily by Women Will Grow the Most Over the Next Decade. [Online]. <https://nwlc.org/resources/jobs-largest-projected-growth-2012-2022-almost-half-are-low-wage-nearly-two-thirds-are-female-dominated/>

<sup>2</sup>National Women's Law Center. (2017, July). Tipped Workers State by State. [Online]. <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Tipped-Workers-State-by-State-7.20.17.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>The National Partnership for Women & Families. (2018, August). Paid Family and Medical Leave: A Racial Justice Issue – and Opportunity. [Online]. <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/paid-leave/paid-family-and-medical-leave-racial-justice-issue-and-opportunity.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>Economic Policy Institute. (2016, April). The cost of child care in Ohio calculator. [Online]. <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/OH>

<sup>5</sup>National Women's Law Center (2017, April). A Snapshot of Working Mothers. [Online]. <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/A-Snapshot-of-Working-Mothers.pdf>

<sup>6</sup>National Partnership for Women & Families. (2017, April). Fact Sheet: Ohio Women and the Wage Gap. [Online]. <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/workplace-fairness/fair-pay/4-2017-oh-wage-gap.pdf>

<sup>7</sup>Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018, April). Lifetime Economic Burden of Intimate Partner Violence Among U.S. Adults. [Online]. American Journal of Preventative Medicine, [https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(18\)31904-4/fulltext](https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(18)31904-4/fulltext).

<sup>8</sup>Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation, State Health Facts: Health Insurance Coverage of Women 19-64 (2016), <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/nonelderly-adult-women/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>

<sup>9</sup>Center for Disease Control. Pregnancy Related Deaths. <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pregnancy-relatedmortality.htm>

<sup>10</sup>Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation. (2017, June). Fact Sheet: Medicaid's Role for Women. [Online]. <https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/fact-sheet/medicaids-role-for-women/>

<sup>11</sup>Innovation Ohio Education Fund. (2017, December). Reproductive Access and Women's Economic Security: A Policy Prescription for Ohio. [Online]. [http://womenspublicpolicynetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/IOEF\\_womenseconomic\\_12.08.pdf](http://womenspublicpolicynetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/IOEF_womenseconomic_12.08.pdf)



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Members of the Women's Public Policy Network are committed to working to implement these and other pro-women policies at the state and local levels.

Although member organizations may not endorse every individual policy promoted by the Women's Public Policy Network, they will not actively work against such efforts to advance the policy.

For more information, visit our website at  
**[WWW.WOMENSPUBLICPOLICYNETWORK.ORG](http://WWW.WOMENSPUBLICPOLICYNETWORK.ORG)**

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