

September 11, 2020

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the undersigned religious and faith-based organizations representing a diversity of faith traditions and communities across the nation, we write today in support of healthy workplace environments and conditions for pregnant workers. We urge you to pass the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (H.R. 2694). People of faith across the ideological spectrum understand that prioritizing the health and safety of pregnant workers should not be a partisan issue. The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act would ensure that pregnant workers can continue safely working to support their families during a pregnancy. The bill requires employers to make the same sort of accommodations for pregnant workers as are already in place for workers with disabilities.

Our faith traditions affirm the dignity of pregnant individuals and the moral imperative of ensuring their safety. We also affirm the dignity of work and the obligation to treat workers justly. **It is immoral for an employer to force a worker to choose between a healthy pregnancy and earning a living.** By passing the bipartisan Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (H.R. 2694), Congress will ensure that workers who are pregnant will be treated fairly in the workforce and can continue earning income to support themselves and their families. Efforts to distract from the central goal of ensuring pregnant workers can maintain their health and the health of their pregnancies by inserting unnecessary, harmful, and politically divisive language into this bill undermines our obligation to protect pregnant workers across our country.

While many pregnant individuals continue working throughout their pregnancies without incident, there are instances when minor accommodations are necessary at the workplace to ensure the safety of the expecting mother and the baby. All too often, requests for simple workplace accommodations like a stool to sit, a water bottle, or a bathroom break are denied. Within the COVID-19 context, such critical accommodations might include proper protective equipment, telework, or staggered work schedules that offer employees commute times which avoid crowded public transportation and increased exposure. Currently, pregnant workers may continue to work without necessary accommodations because they fear losing their jobs and need the income, thus endangering their health or the health of their pregnancy. Without these protections, it is not uncommon for pregnant workers to be let go or forced out onto unpaid leave for requesting accommodations. Many others must quit their job to avoid risking the health of their pregnancy.

Passing the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act is a moral and economic imperative; two-thirds of women who had their first child between 2006 and 2008 worked during pregnancy, and 88 percent of these first-time mothers worked into their last trimester.¹ Keeping these women

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns of First-Time Mothers 1961-2008, 4, 6 (Oct. 2011).

healthy and in the workforce is paramount to family economic security. Nearly 25 million mothers with children under 18 are in the workforce, making up nearly 1 in 6 of all workers. And about 3 in 4 mothers in the workforce are working full time. Millions of families rely on their earnings. In 2017, 41 percent of mothers were the sole or primary breadwinners in their families, while 23.2 percent of mothers were co-breadwinners.² Whole families suffer when pregnant workers are forced out of a job.

The undersigned religious and faith-based groups are united in support of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act. We strongly urge you to vote for the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, and to vote against any motion to recommit that may be offered.

Sincerely, the undersigned:

Ameinu

Arizona Jews for Justice

Aytzim: Ecological Judaism

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action

Catholic Labor Network

Church World Service

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces

Faith Action Network

Faith Action Network - Washington State

Franciscan Action Network

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Keshet

Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action

² Jasmine Tucker, *Equal Pay for Mothers Is Critical for Families*, National Women's Law Center (June 2019) <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Moms-EPD-v5.pdf>

Jewish Family & Children's Service of Greater Boston

Jewish Women International

Justice Revival

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Council of Churches

National Council of Jewish Women

Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Pax Christi USA

T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

Union for Reform Judaism

Uri L'Tzedek

Women of Reform Judaism