

September 14, 2020

Re: Support the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act

Dear Representative:

The undersigned public health professionals, health care clinicians, and maternal health organizations dedicated to the health and well-being of mothers, infants, and families enthusiastically support the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (H.R. 2694). Modeled after the Americans with Disabilities Act, the bill would require employers to provide reasonable, temporary workplace accommodations to pregnant workers as long as the accommodation does not impose an undue hardship on the employer. This bill is critically important because no one should have to choose between having a healthy pregnancy and a paycheck.

Three-quarters of women will be pregnant and employed at some point in their lives.<sup>1</sup> Most pregnant workers can expect a routine pregnancy and healthy birth. However, health care professionals have consistently recommended that some pregnant individuals make adjustments in their work activities to sustain a healthy pregnancy and prevent adverse pregnancy outcomes, including preterm birth or miscarriage.<sup>2</sup> These medically necessary workplace accommodations can include allowing additional bathroom breaks, opportunities to stay hydrated, lifting restrictions, or access to a chair or stool to decrease time spent standing.

Unfortunately, too many pregnant workers, particularly pregnant people of color, face barriers to incorporating even these small changes to their workdays.<sup>3</sup> Workplace accommodations help safeguard a healthy pregnancy or prevent harm to a higher-risk pregnancy. Across the country, pregnant workers continue to be denied simple, no-cost or low-cost, temporary adjustments in their work settings or activities and instead risk being fired or forced to take unpaid leave to preserve the health of their pregnancy.<sup>4</sup> Low-wage pregnant workers in physically demanding jobs, which are disproportionately occupied by people of color, feel the impact most acutely.<sup>5</sup> This impossible choice forces many pregnant workers to continue working without accommodations, putting women and their pregnancies at risk of long-lasting and severe health consequences.

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act is a measured approach to a serious problem. As public health professionals, health care clinicians, and maternal health organizations, we understand the importance of reasonable workplace accommodations to ensure that pregnant persons can continue to provide for their families and have safe and healthy pregnancies. We collectively urge swift passage of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> Alexandra Cawthorne & Melissa Alpert, *Labor Pains: Improving Employment and Economic Security for Pregnant Women and New Mothers*, (Aug. 2009), at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2009/08/03/6599/labor-pains/>.

<sup>2</sup> [Employment considerations during pregnancy and the postpartum period. ACOG Committee Opinion No 733. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Obstet Gynecol 2018;131:e115–23.](#)

<sup>3</sup> National Women's Law Center & A Better Balance, *It Shouldn't be a Heavy Lift: Fair Treatment for Pregnant Workers* (2013), <https://www.abetterbalance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ItShouldntBeAHeavyLift.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

1,000 Days  
American College of Nurse-Midwives  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses  
Black Mamas Matter Alliance  
California Breastfeeding Coalition  
California WIC Association  
Center for Reproductive Rights  
Children's HealthWatch  
Families USA  
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Georgia  
HealthyWomen  
Human Rights Watch  
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda  
Majaica, LLC  
March for Moms  
March of Dimes  
National Black Nurses Association  
National Birth Equity Collaborative  
National Institute for Reproductive Health  
National Network of Abortion Funds  
National WIC Association  
National Women's Health Network  
Nutrition First - WIC Association of Washington State  
Pennsylvania WIC Association  
Perinatal Health Equity Foundation  
Physicians for Reproductive Health  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need  
Shriver Center on Poverty Law  
SisterReach  
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine  
Tara Hansen Foundation  
The Afiya Center  
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity  
U.S. Breastfeeding Committee  
WIC Association of NYS, Inc.  
Wisconsin WIC Association  
YWCA of Greater Atlanta  
ZERO TO THREE