

SPOTLIGHT

A Message from Our Co-Presidents



a better
balance

the work and family legal center

Dear Friend,

We founded A Better Balance 15 years ago with a clear vision: no one should be forced to sacrifice their economic security to care for themselves and the people they love. We needed sweeping policy action to address our nation's longstanding care crisis. Yet the workers most profoundly in need of support were being left out of national conversations on work-life balance. From the start, we recognized that for low wage workers—particularly low-income mothers of color—supportive work family policies are not “nice-to-haves,” but an urgent matter of survival. Now, following a year of public health and economic crisis, our nation has reached a long overdue reckoning with this reality. And we are so proud to have paved the way for this pivotal moment.

Recent federal progress in our movement to value care and support working caregivers has been extremely heartening, from President Biden's historic paid family and medical leave proposal, to extremely promising recent momentum for the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, to bills introduced this year to advance paid sick time, workplace flexibility,

and supports for breastfeeding workers. As we celebrate a decade-and-a-half of progress, we are proud of our years of leadership and success passing and enforcing supportive work-family policies like these on the state and local levels, laying the blueprint for our current federal momentum and national recognition of the care crisis. And as we continue to hear from huge numbers of workers who are facing acute challenges, we know these laws and our helpline's role in educating and empowering workers to exercise their rights have made a world of difference.

At the same time, we recognize that there's still so much work to do to get these federal bills across the finish line this year—but we know it's possible with your support.

Thank you for your dedication to building the fair and equitable future that workers caring for themselves and their loved ones deserve.

In Partnership,

Dina & Sherry

Major Steps Toward Fairness & Equality for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Workers



Dina Bakst testifying before Congress on the PWFA and the PUMP Act.

The past year has proven especially challenging for pregnant workers and new moms—particularly those in low-wage jobs—who have long been devalued and faced hostility at work. This spring, our Co-President Dina Bakst testified in support of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA) for a second time at the “Fighting For Fairness” Congressional hearing in March, uplifting the devastating economic and health impacts of the “pregnancy penalty” for working women—especially in the wake of the COVID pandemic. The PWFA would put a stop to pregnant workers being pushed off the job or forced to risk their health for needing modest accommodations. Following the hearing, we led a digital Week of Action ahead of Mother’s Day that reached and engaged millions in our efforts to urge Congress to respect pregnancy, honor mothers, and pass this critical bill. Crucially, we lifted up the voices and stories of the women we have advocated alongside for the last ten years.

The very next week, the House of Representatives passed the bill in an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote. The bill was also introduced in the Senate with strong bipartisan support. We are proud to have launched and to lead the movement to pass this crucial piece of legislation.



ABB Community Advocate Armanda Legros, Sen. Bob Casey, and Rep. Jerry Nadler join us for an event calling for the PWFA.

In addition to testifying before Congress and leading the Week of Action, we have met with legislators representing every corner of the country, joined with social media influencers and our Community Advocates to spread awareness about the PWFA, submitted letters of support for the legislative record, published opinion pieces and been featured in numerous news articles, and organized sign-on letters with support from hundreds of organizations. We are hopeful the bill will get over the finish line this year!

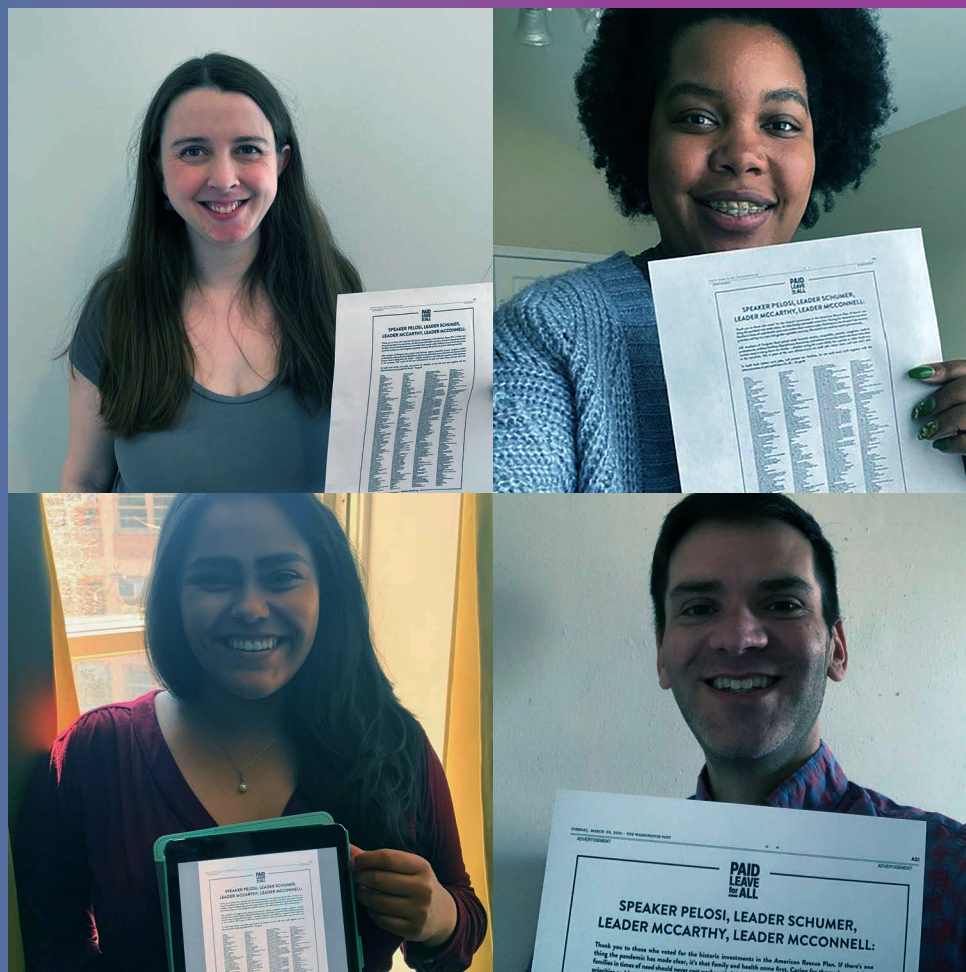
Our March testimony also highlighted the Providing Urgent Maternal Protections (PUMP) for Nursing Mothers Act, another important piece of legislation that would extend access to break time and private space to pump breastmilk in the workplace—meaning coverage for millions of nursing mothers who are currently excluded by gaps in existing law as well as comprehensive remedies for workers harmed by legal violations. In May, the PUMP Act advanced in both the House and Senate, marking a key step forward in the fight to create a more equitable future for working mothers and families.

Highlighting the Climate Crisis’ Impact on Maternal Health

As rising heat due to the climate crisis becomes more urgent to address, it is critical that Congress considers the impact on maternal health. In May, we co-hosted and spoke at a Congressional briefing alongside Senator Ed Markey and Representative Lauren Underwood highlighting the adverse effects climate has on maternal health outcomes, particularly for women of color, and uplifting key solutions. Our ABB Community Advocate Tesia Buckles also shared her powerful story before Congress of being denied water on the job during her pregnancy while working in stifling heat.

Historic Progress for Federal Paid Family & Medical Leave for All

Paid Leave



for all.

ABB staff members holding our full page Washington Post ad calling for Paid Leave For All, from New York to Tennessee to Colorado.

We are proud that after years of work, paid leave is at the forefront of the national conversation. President Biden, in his historic American Families Plan, laid out a comprehensive paid family and medical leave proposal which would guarantee all workers 12 weeks of paid leave to bond with a new child, care for a seriously ill loved one or one's own serious illness, and more.

As part of this proposal, the White House indicated its support for our model of an inclusive definition of family that would allow workers to take leave to care for all of their closest loved ones, regardless of biological or legal relationship. Additionally, House Ways & Means Committee Chair Richard Neal vowed to pass paid leave for all and released a strong proposal.

Both House and Senate committees recently held hearings in which we submitted testimony amplifying the voices of workers and stressing the urgent need for workers to have time to care for themselves and their loved ones, and paid leave's key role in our nation's economic recovery as we build back better.

We are proud to lead the advocacy effort for paid leave as part of the leadership team of the national Paid Leave For All campaign, and through our continued efforts to pass paid leave laws at the state and local level.

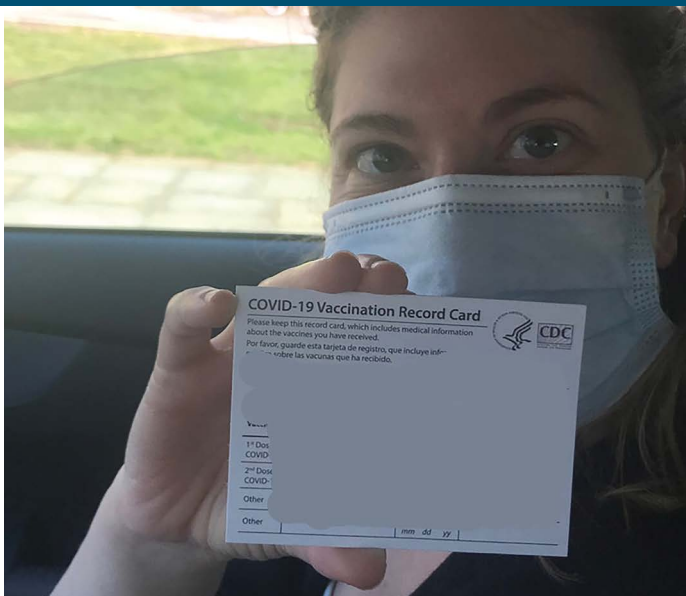
Victories for Paid Sick Time Continue to Add Up

Although paid sick time has always been a fundamental priority of our organization, the public health crisis this year has underscored its importance, as too many frontline workers were forced to either lose their paycheck, or go to work sick and spread COVID-19.

We have been urgently working with states and localities across the country to enact both emergency and permanent paid sick time measures. Most recently, Massachusetts enacted an emergency COVID-19 sick time measure with our help, joining dozens of states and localities who have provided workers with emergency sick leave in response to the pandemic. And in a major victory this spring, New Mexico passed a law guaranteeing almost all workers in the state a permanent right to take paid sick time for themselves or their loved ones. This landmark victory makes New Mexico the fourteenth state in the U.S. to guarantee workers a right to paid sick time.

We are proud that this strong new law is based on our model bill, and we are also proud to have provided ongoing support, advice, and analysis for advocates on the ground in New Mexico. We look forward to continuing to advance strong paid sick time policies across the country, and we are pushing for Congress to pass the Healthy Families Act immediately, which would guarantee workers across the country a right to sick time for personal and family needs.

Pushing for Paid Leave for Workers to Get Vaccinated



Despite the COVID-19 vaccine being free to all and made widely available, daily vaccine distribution numbers have fallen. Paid leave will play a crucial role in ensuring that people in the U.S. continue to get vaccinated. Under a new law in New York, workers can take up to four hours of paid leave per shot of the COVID-19 vaccine. We are working to guarantee workers similar rights in several other states and localities, and to educate workers about their rights to take time to get vaccinated under existing permanent and emergency paid sick leave laws.

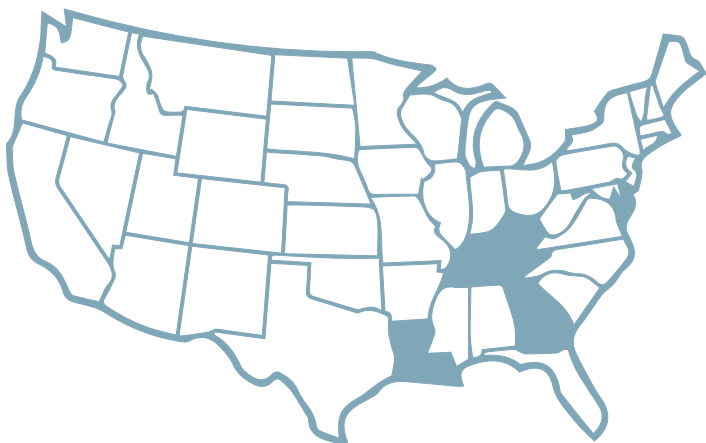
Every worker deserves access to the paid time they need to stay healthy, including by getting vaccinated!



Legal fellow Astrid Reyes conducts a Spanish-language know your rights training on paid leave.

Progress for New & Expectant Parents in the South

This year, thanks to our efforts, we've continued to see exciting progress on the local and state levels in the South, laying the groundwork for working families across the region.

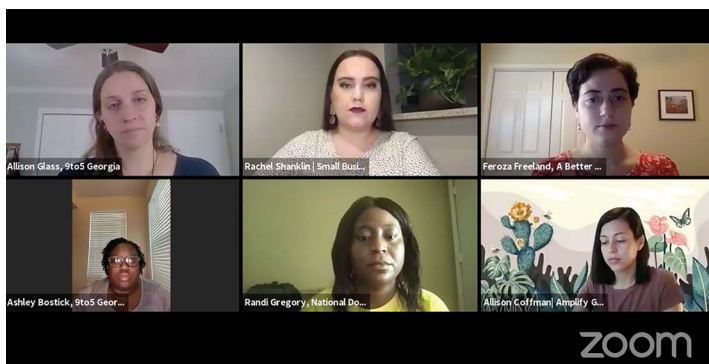


Louisville, Kentucky unanimously passed an ordinance providing 12 weeks of paid parental leave to municipal workers.

In another exciting first step in the region, Georgia will provide several weeks of paid parental leave to teachers and state employees. We are working with advocates across Georgia to build upon this momentum and extend paid family leave to every worker in the state!

The Louisiana Pregnant Workers Fairness Act was passed with near-unanimous support and a similar law was introduced for the first time ever in Alabama.

Tennessee's Pandemic/Essential Employee Child Care Payment Assistance was extended through August, providing payments to parents who are essential workers, including grocery store workers and others.



Feroza Freeland, Policy Manager of the Southern Office, speaks at a paid family leave press conference.

Implementing the Laws We Pass

As we continue to pass fair and supportive work-family policies like paid leave across the country, we are also working with policymakers and government agencies to see that these laws are implemented smoothly and equitably.

Following two landmark paid leave victories in Colorado last year, we are taking a lead role on the ground to ensure the State's new paid sick time law and paid family and medical leave ballot initiative are successfully implemented. We are working closely with state officials and partners to ensure that strong regulations are issued, workers understand their new legal rights, businesses comply with their responsibilities, and the State enforces these new paid leave protections. We are also providing similar support to partners in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Oregon, and continuing to work across New York and in dozens of other states and cities to guarantee that the laws we help to draft and pass are working as intended and protecting those who need paid leave the most.

Empowering Workers with Our New Workplace Rights Hub

We continue to hear every day from low wage workers—disproportionately women of color—who have been facing unprecedented challenges juggling work and care responsibilities in the wake of the pandemic. Too often, due to systemic failures, workers do not know they have rights and legal protections that can help them stay healthy and care for their families, without jeopardizing their economic security. But knowledge is power, and that's why we began 2021 by launching our new Workplace Rights Hub—a one-of-a-kind, state-by-state guide for workers caring for themselves and their loved ones to understand and exercise their legal rights.

Our new Workplace Rights Hub at abetterbalance.org/know-your-rights.

Workplace Rights Hub

A state by state legal guide to asserting your rights for workers caring for yourself and your loved ones.



Amplifying Voices from Our Helpline



ABB Community Advocates Dreama, Virginia, and Tasha share their stories during a worker leadership panel in our 2021 convening on the care crisis with Better Life Lab; “That’s exactly why Congress has a duty to act,” said Rep. Dan Kildee as he shared Alexandria’s story with fellow Congressmembers.

In 2021, our outreach and direct legal services work has continued to be critically important for thousands of workers across the country who lost their jobs, were forced to return to unsafe workplace conditions, or who required time off to deal with COVID-19 and its effects, including lack of access to childcare. As the federal paid leave law expired at the end of 2020, our helpline was once again flooded with workers seeking information and guidance so they could understand and assert their rights. We have assisted nearly a thousand workers so far in 2021, representing about a 60% increase in inquiries received during the same time period in 2019, before the pandemic.

We have also been proud to amplify the voices of workers who have called our helpline in front of Congress, like when our Community Advocate Tesia joined us at our Congressional briefing on climate change and maternal health. In another example, Alexandria worked as a massage therapist in Michigan. She is due to give birth in October 2021. After she announced her plans to start a family, her boss handed her an agreement to sign indicating that if she were ever to take leave for more than one to two days at a time, her salary would be suspended.

When Alexandria raised concerns about not having income while recovering from childbirth, her boss callously told her that maternity benefits “can’t be that important.” She had no legal recourse in this situation, as Michigan does not guarantee workers paid family leave, nor did she qualify for job-protected unpaid leave.

In calling for immediate action to address the care crisis for working women with supportive policies like paid family and medical leave in Congressional testimony, we uplifted stories from our free and confidential legal helpline, including Alexandria’s, that demonstrate the real-world consequences workers and their families face every day due to our inadequate care infrastructure in this country. Congressman Dan Kildee (MI) even read aloud Alexandria’s story into the legislative record during the hearing. Alexandria was moved to tears while listening to a member of Congress lift up her story. “It just feels so good to know that people actually care after everything I’ve been through,” she told us. We are grateful to Alexandria for speaking out, and we won’t stop fighting until workers like her have access to the support and protections they need!

Celebrating 15 Years Advancing Work-Family Justice & Combating the Care Crisis



Senator Chuck Schumer
U.S. Senator, New York



Natasha Jackson
Community Advocate, A Better Balance

“At a time when so many in our nation are struggling, I’m grateful for all the work A Better Balance has done in fundamentally changing the way our country thinks about pregnant women, mothers, and all caregivers.”

–Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer

“A Better Balance gave me a platform and inspired me to fight for fairness for all women.”
–ABB Community Advocate Natasha Jackson

In May, we gathered virtually for our Spring Celebration to reflect on 15 years of fighting to advance justice for workers caring for themselves and their loved ones. After a decade and a half of progress, we came together for an evening of celebrating how far we’ve come and discussing solutions to the ongoing care crisis alongside an incredible group of guests, including Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, comedian Samantha Bee, and an amazing group of honorees—former EEOC commissioner Chai Feldblum, Ana Oliveira and the New York Women’s Foundation, and ABB Community Advocate Natasha Jackson—who have worked alongside us toward our shared goal of creating a more equitable future for workers and their families. As we look to the road ahead, we are committed to many more years of advocacy and education.

It’s not too late to celebrate this milestone with us and watch this inspiring event!
[Visit \[abetterbalance.org/spring-celebration-2021\]\(https://abetterbalance.org/spring-celebration-2021\)](https://abetterbalance.org/spring-celebration-2021)

A huge thank you to all of our generous evening sponsors! Special thank you to...



*Jessica Hough and Raina Brubaker
Beth and Joshua Nash
Jenna and Paul Segal
Janice Goodman
Elipidio Villarreal and Anne Weisberg*

Yes!

I want to help advance justice for workers and families by supporting A Better Balance!

- I will make my donation online at abetterbalance.org/donate.

OR

- I will send a check made payable to A Better Balance to the address below.



Mailing Address: A Better Balance, 40 Worth Street, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10013

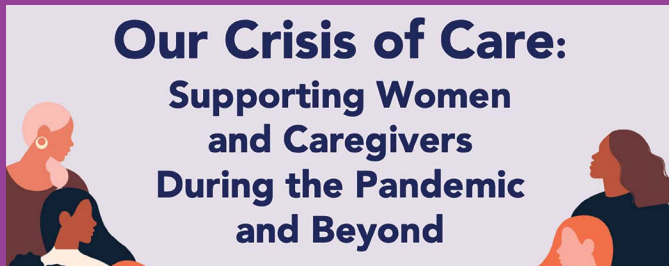
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40 Worth Street, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10013



Our March 2021 report, "Our Crisis of Care." [Click here to read.](#)

More workers than ever—especially women—have experienced an increased need for flexibility in the workplace this year, especially due to the need to care for sick loved ones, navigate the closure of schools, childcare, and eldercare facilities, and respond to other challenges posed by the pandemic.

To better understand working caregivers' needs and challenges when it comes to flexibility in the workplace and craft worker-informed solutions, we partnered with the New York City Comptroller's Office to conduct a comprehensive work-family survey of New Yorkers and published a report in March 2021, "Our Crisis of Care," based on our findings. Those findings revealed that access to flexible work arrangements remains highly unequal, and that workers, especially low-wage women of color with caregiving obligations, routinely face blowback for even requesting schedule adjustments. Additionally, we found that over half of women caring for children reduced their job hours during the pandemic, and women were twice as likely as men to need time off due to

parental responsibilities. We co-hosted a panel with the Comptroller's Office, in collaboration with the New York Women's Foundation, to inform the public about this important information. We are committed to pushing for policies to ensure workers across the country can request and access flexible schedule arrangements, including the recently introduced federal Flexibility for Working Families Act, which would ensure workers can request flexible schedules without fear of retaliation. Additionally, we remain committed to enforcing fair and flexible scheduling laws we've worked to pass, including New York City's Fair Workweek law.