

# SPOTLIGHT

How we're advancing work-family justice together in 2022.



## A Message from the Co-Presidents

### Dear Friend,

2022 has taken an undeniably alarming and heartbreaking turn. We stand with those across the country who are mourning and protesting the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, which comes as a sharp and devastating blow to women's health, economic security, and autonomy in this country. Our mission to advance justice for workers caring for themselves and their loved ones is deeply intertwined with the fight for reproductive rights.

In its decision, the Court falsely claimed that new and expecting parents are well-supported in our country. We know better. Every day, we hear from women who have faced mistreatment or been forced off the job due to pregnancy, childbirth, or caregiving needs. As a country, we still have no national right to paid family leave, to sick time, to pregnancy or lactation accommodations, among other essential workplace protections. Everyone needs to have the right to choose when and if to have a child, and, now more than ever, deserves to be supported by our society when making either choice.

Within this newsletter, you'll find updates on our ongoing movement for stronger workplace protections for women,

parents, and all workers as they care for themselves and loved ones. With abortion bans now in effect in many states, as well as an ongoing baby formula shortage, the childcare crisis, and the continued strain of the pandemic, we know it is an especially trying time for the communities we serve. Our free work-family legal helpline will remain an important resource for workers across the country—especially low-wage women and mothers of color—looking to understand their rights. And we are proud to formally launch our Community Advocates program, to double down on partnering with and empowering workers as they share their powerful stories to call for change and as they spread vital information in their own communities.

Your support continues to move the needle and make systemic change possible, so we all can care for ourselves and our loved ones, without sacrificing our economic security. We are so grateful for your longstanding commitment to justice and equality.

In solidarity,  
*Dina & Sherry*

# Building Urgent Momentum for the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act

Building on ten years of leading the fight to ensure that pregnant and postpartum workers across the country can access the accommodations they need to stay safe and healthy on the job—and during a pivotal moment to do all that we can to support women and families—we are urgently working to push the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act over the finish line in the Senate. In a difficult political landscape, we are proud to have reached this key juncture where the bill is ready for a Senate vote, with the bipartisan support it needs for passage.

As we call on Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer to bring the PWFA to a vote now, we recently delivered a letter with a bold call to action from nearly 120 New York faith leaders, who wrote: “Failing to bring the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act to a vote would be a moral failing.” For Mother’s Day, we helped lead a massive digital campaign calling on the Senate to respect pregnancy and honor mothers by passing the PWFA, with powerful videos that rallied support across social media, eye-catching ads in media publications like *POLITICO* and the *Washington Post*, and in-person actions in the halls of Congress. Earlier this spring, we released a joint report with our partners at Black Mamas Matter Alliance, lifting up the lived expertise of Black mothers and organizational

leaders as they explained how these protections would be critical in combating the Black maternal health crisis. **We will continue urging our elected leaders to seize this moment to prioritize maternal health and economic justice with the real, urgent relief for pregnant workers and new moms this bill would provide. We won’t stop fighting until the PWFA is law.**



ABB Co-President Dina Bakst pens an op-ed for Mother’s Day, urging passage of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, in the *Washington Post*.

# Pushing for Support for New & Breastfeeding Parents Amid the Formula Shortage

As our country grapples with a nationwide shortage in infant formula, we have mobilized with our partners to urgently push for the passage for the PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act, which would support breastfeeding parents in the workplace, guaranteeing workers excluded from current federal protections a right to the time and space they need to pump breastmilk. As we see firsthand at A Better Balance, too many workers, especially low-wage workers, want to breastfeed but are unable to do so due to barriers in the workplace—and the formula shortage has only added to that stress and strain for so many. **No one should ever fear for their ability to feed their baby, and passing laws like the PUMP Act is a key piece of the puzzle.**



ABB Senior Policy Counsel Sarah Brafman on Capitol Hill to deliver water bottles to Congress members, highlighting how pregnant workers are pushed off the job for needing accommodations like a water bottle for hydration.

# Securing Paid Family & Medical Leave Victories in Maryland and Delaware

This Spring, Maryland and Delaware became the latest states—joining 10 other states and D.C.—to enact paid family and medical leave programs, so workers can take twelve weeks of paid leave to welcome a new child, care for a seriously ill loved one, or attend to their own medical needs.

In both states, we worked closely with a coalition of advocates and with legislators to craft these policies point-by-point, rally for their passage, and provide detailed support, guidance, and defense. We congratulate our partners on these incredible victories, and look forward to our continued work together to ensure the laws are successfully implemented and enforced.

*We are so proud to be expanding access to this fundamental right and leading the way on building a future where every worker can take the time they need to care for themselves and their loved ones.*



*Stickers from the Maryland paid leave campaign.*



*Cassandra Gomez, ABB Staff Attorney, and Molly Weston Williamson join a convening in Wilmington, Delaware celebrating the passage of paid leave.*

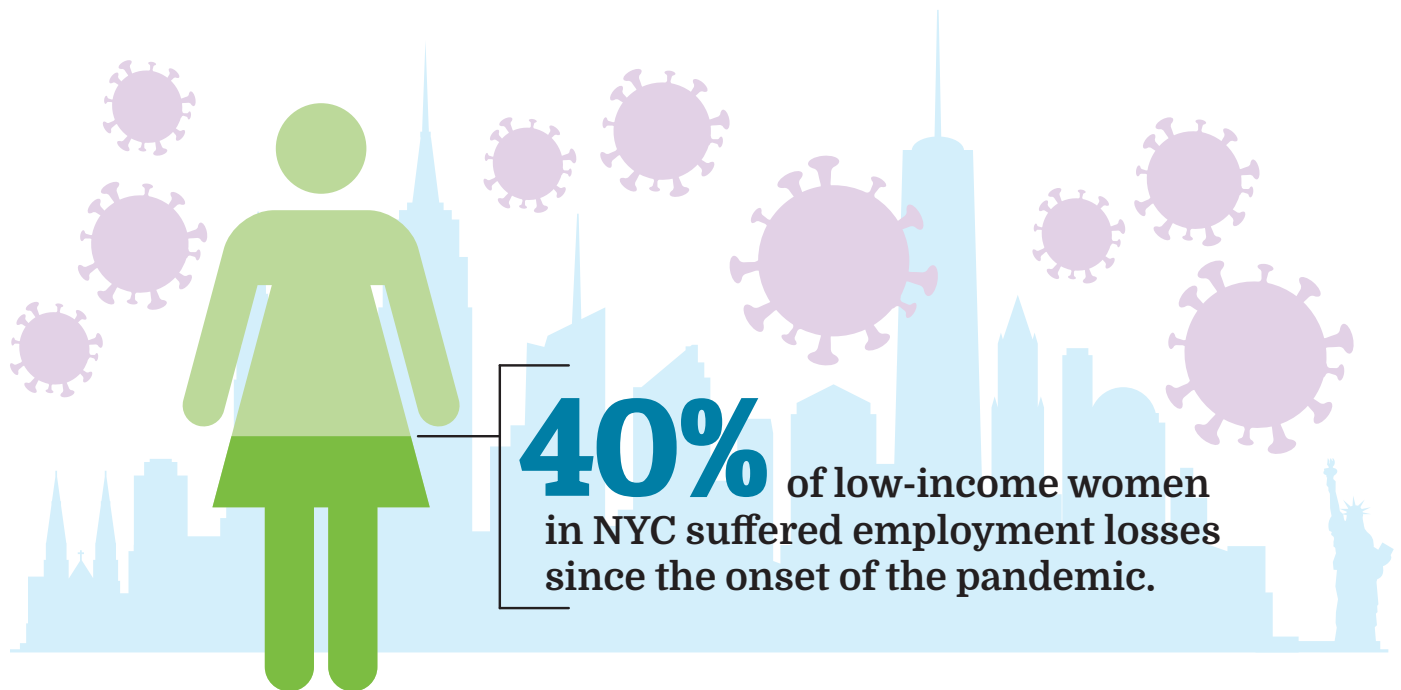
## Building a Wave of Progress for Paid Leave in the South

We are also pleased to share exciting steps forward in the fight for paid leave in the South. South Carolina's Governor recently signed into law six weeks of paid parental leave for state employees. And Nashville—the home of our Southern office—announced a plan to provide educators with paid family leave, building on the successful paid family leave policy for Nashville metro workers we drafted and helped to pass in 2017. These victories are part of a growing trend of state and local governments in the South providing paid leave for their employees.



# Advancing a Just Recovery for Women in the Workforce in New York City

Women, especially low-income women of color and mothers, have suffered devastating economic loss since the onset of the pandemic. In June, we released a joint report, “Women in the Workforce,” with our partners at the Community Service Society of New York which presents staggering new survey data showing how low-income women in the New York City workforce are disproportionately bearing the brunt of pandemic-related economic harm. For example, we found that 40% of low-income women suffered employment losses since the onset of the pandemic—and almost 25% of these women had to drop out of the labor force entirely. **As New York City rebuilds, we are pushing for bold action and targeted solutions to ensure women can thrive, from investing in educating the workforce about existing rights to expanding access to paid leave, fair and flexible scheduling, and quality, affordable childcare.**



## Sharing Lessons Learned on State Paid Sick Time and Making the Case for a Federal Law



As we entered our third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, we took steps to highlight how the permanent and emergency paid sick time policies we’ve successfully passed at the state and local levels across the country have been a lifeline for working families, local economies, and public health as a whole. The need is clearer than ever for a federal paid sick time law to allow all workers to care for their health and that of their loved ones, without sacrificing a paycheck. To that end, in March, we released a new report, “Sick Without A Safety Net,” that urges members of Congress, advocates, and the public to work together and pass the Healthy Families Act. The report draws on research, the firsthand lessons A Better Balance has learned from successful state campaigns, and the lived expertise of our clients and worker Community Advocates to make the case for a national, permanent right to paid sick time.



## Cassandra on the Work to Pass Policies that Recognize All Families

Over the past several years, A Better Balance and our partners in the Family Justice Network have doubled down on our work to shift the way that paid leave laws define “family,” so that workers can take time off of work to care for all of their closest loved ones. We recently launched a new campaign, “This Is My Family,” to share stories of the many different forms that families can take, including chosen family. As a Mexican lesbian from a working-class family myself, I was raised by a single dad, my grandma, and my aunts. My cousins are like my siblings, and some of my deepest personal bonds are with queer friends who have become my family over time. When COVID hit, many people suddenly needed to adjust their daily lives to fit the realities of the moment—we all had to care for and be cared for by the people closest to us who were nearby. I think that now, a lot of people understand that the people we care for and who care for us in times of need—our families—are so much more than just the people who we grew up with.

- Cassandra Gomez, Staff Attorney



## Lauren on Deepening Connections in the South Through Our New Alabama Office

I joined A Better Balance’s team this year as a staff attorney at our new Montgomery, Alabama office, where I have been working closely with our Tennessee-based Southern Office on both policy advocacy and outreach and education. The opening of our Alabama office really opens the door to creating more meaningful and deep connections in Alabama and the deep South as a whole, where trust is essential to making progress. My commitment to social justice is the driving force behind my work at ABB. The pandemic has shown just how important supportive policies like paid leave, paid sick time, and protections for pregnant workers and new parents are, especially in places like Alabama, which is one of the only states without its own state-level anti-discrimination protections. Some of my proudest work from my time with ABB so far includes developing know your rights resources for pregnant workers in Alabama and working closely with Black women-led organizational partners on the ground here to deepen connections with local communities.

- Lauren Boothe, Staff Attorney



## Dana on Running a Workplace Rights Clinic for Women & Parents in the Bronx

As an Equal Justice Works fellow at A Better Balance’s New York office, my work focuses on protecting the rights of low-income New Yorkers who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or parenting. The heart of my project is a legal clinic that I created at a WIC (Women, Infant and Children) Center in the Bronx, in order to be able to meet low-income pregnant and postpartum people where they are at, bringing them legal education and services in an environment where they were already seeking other services and support. This past year, I’ve been able to personally train nearly 500 individuals, including maternal health and service providers, on laws that exist to help workers care for themselves and their loved ones. I love training workers; it’s exciting to be able to help people piece together these different laws—that they might not otherwise be aware of—so they’re able to access the time and the money they need and deserve. It is heartening to see how the laws we’ve worked to pass as an organization are making a world of difference for workers and their families here in New York. At the same time, we are also able to hear from workers about how the laws could better suit their needs—and that then shapes the next chapter of our policy advocacy.

- Dana Bolger, Equal Justice Works Fellow



## Voices from Our Helpline: **Lauren's Story**

Lauren, an administrative worker at a shipyard in Virginia, called our helpline when she was 7 months pregnant. She was experiencing morning sickness and back problems, and received a doctor's note recommending she work from home. Instead, her manager suggested that she take an unpaid leave of absence. With A Better Balance's support, she was able to assert her rights under the Virginia Pregnant Workers Fairness Act.

Lauren shared:

*"My pregnancy complications were worsening by coming into work, and without information on the Virginia PWFA, I wouldn't have known that what I was requesting was reasonable or possible. My income is also needed to support my home, and 4 year old. After calling ABB's helpline and receiving information on the Virginia PWFA, I was able to discuss the option to work from home successfully with HR and my manager rather than be placed on leave without pay. I felt confident to stand up for myself and have a discussion with HR about my needs."*

**We are so proud to have already directly supported hundreds of workers like Lauren in 2022 through our free work-family legal helpline, allowing them to receive the protections and benefits they are entitled to and the peace of mind they deserve.**



# 1-833-NEED-ABB

# Calling Out Abusive Attendance Practices at Amazon

Through our helpline, we hear every day from workers suffering under abusive attendance policies, who often fear punishment for taking even legally-protected time off work as they accrue disciplinary “points” for absences, tardiness, and early exits from work. We began the year by sending a letter to Amazon CEO Andy Jassy urging him to correct the company’s Attendance Points Policy, which keeps workers in the dark about their legal rights and makes it difficult, if not impossible, for them to take time off work for sickness, emergencies, and caregiving needs. Following our letter to Amazon, Senator Elizabeth Warren and other members of Congress sent a letter to the Department of Labor and Equal Opportunity Employment Commission urging them to investigate Amazon’s attendance policy, directly citing A Better Balance’s analysis.

*We remain committed to protecting the rights of workers by combating these abusive attendance policies through public actions like our letter, litigation, and legislative solutions.*

## Connecting Workers with Opportunities to Empower Their Communities & Advocate for Change



Crystal Phillips  
Community Advocate

Working to pass policies that are directly informed by the firsthand, lived expertise of workers who contact our helpline is central to A Better Balance’s mission. We are thrilled to officially launch our Community Advocates program, which empowers the workers we hear from every day to share their stories, develop leadership skills, provide tools to empower their own communities to exercise their workplace rights, and fight alongside our organization for the policies working families need today.

**CRYSTAL PHILLIPS**, a youth counselor from Kentucky, joined the program after contacting our helpline for information about her rights to emergency paid sick leave when she experienced COVID-19 symptoms. Since becoming an ABB Community Advocate, Crystal has been interviewed by Axios, was featured in our report, “Sick Without A Safety Net,” and joined us for a panel discussion to share her story and call for permanent paid sick time for all workers.

*“I believe that everyone who’s working should be provided with this paid sick time, because it’s so hard dealing with being sick if you’re in the hospital or being quarantined – worrying about how you’re going to pay your bills, or just your livelihood basically...I hope that my story helps someone,”* says Crystal.

# 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](https://abetterbalance.org/donate).

\*Enclosed is a gift for: \_\_\_\_\_

\* Please make your check payable to A Better Balance and mail to the address below.



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