

# Employment Rights

We have an opportunity to reimagine the institutions that have long undermined the progress of women, people of color, and the LGBTQ+ community to ensure that people are fairly compensated and that everyone can work with dignity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare systemic inequalities that impose unacceptable burdens on women and people of color. Due to longstanding and widespread structural racism and discrimination, Black, Brown, and Latinx women have been disproportionately pushed into unstable, low-wage work. As a result, low income women and women of color disproportionately face high levels of unemployment and work on the frontlines under dangerous conditions with inadequate pay and support. These injustices must be corrected.

COVID-19 has made it impossible to ignore problematic gaps in our social and economic structures. Our unemployment system is totally inadequate, which harms women who now face high levels of unemployment, a more difficult time returning to work, and the loss of critical benefits like healthcare and paid family leave, if they even had them to begin with. Using COVID-19 constraints and efficiency concerns as pretext, workplaces continue to engage in unlawful discrimination, pushing out pregnant workers, which harms families, our economy, and the workplace. Our healthcare system is broken, reserving quality care for the wealthy and those employed in higher paying jobs. At the same time, the pandemic is widening cracks in our fragile childcare system and eviscerating childcare providers at a time when society is all the more aware of their intrinsic value. Without childcare options or realistic job opportunities, the pandemic is pushing a large number of women out of the workforce as the economy reopens, preventing them from supporting their families and exacerbating existing gender and racial disparities.

Now, more than ever, we have an opportunity to correct these systemic injustices. We must ensure that going forward all people, regardless of identity, background, or immigration status, no longer face discrimination, that women's work is valued, and that all workers have access to equal opportunity in the workforce and economy. We now have an opportunity to reimagine the institutions that have long undermined the progress of women, people of color, and the LGBTQ+ community to ensure that people are no longer forced to work multiple jobs to support their children and that everyone can work with dignity.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- + **Fund and implement a comprehensive childcare master plan** which includes universal and equitable access to quality childcare, just compensation and respect for those providing care.
- + **Expand paid family leave benefits** to be more accessible to all low-wage workers and ensure adequate guaranteed paid sick, safe, and personal time.
- + **Provide access to healthcare benefits, independent of employment**, to ensure that everyone has access to these critical benefits.
- + **Prioritize health and safety** especially for essential, older and disabled workers.
- + **Create and enforce laws and policies to end discrimination, including sexual harassment, in the workplace.**
- + **Enact aggressive measures to achieve pay equity and dismantle occupational segregation.** Enact a **true living wage** for all workers that increases the minimum wage to reflect the local cost of living and eliminates the tipped minimum wage in all industries. Not only must women earn higher wages in the jobs they are doing, they must be trained to do jobs that pay more.
- + **Amend existing protections** to ensure that women working in the most vulnerable sectors, such as home health care, those who work in the new "gig economy," domestic workers and tipped workers, are not excluded from labor and anti-discrimination protections.
- + **Equip state and local oversight agencies with the funding, capacity, and independent authority** to robustly tackle discrimination in the workplace.
- + **Guarantee all workers the right to organize** and engage in collective bargaining to safeguard their rights together.