



PRESS RELEASE

Date: March 16, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Blue Carreker, 518 4668500, bwcarreker@gmail.com

On Monday, March 16, 2026 the PowHer® New York Network brought eighteen leaders from fourteen different statewide and regional organizations to Albany to meet with state leaders and advocate for budget and legislative priorities they consider critical to inclusive gender equity in New York State.

As Beverly Neufeld, President of PowHerNY explained, "For over 10 years, PowHerNY has been bringing together gender and racial justice organizations to work in collaboration on a shared vision. This year we are stepping up our advocacy and presenting our [2026 PowHerNY Network Legislative Priorities](#) in-person in Albany. This agenda calls for bold action to advance the needs of women and families, gender-expansive individuals, and marginalized New Yorkers. We are excited to work with our elected leaders on these key policy reforms to ensure that New York continues to move forward in the face of strong headwinds."

The Network was represented by leading policy and advocacy organizations coordinated by Network Facilitator, Blue Carreker. Representatives included: Moriah Engelberg and Jesse Workman from **A Better Balance**; Donna Schneiderman of **BKForge**; Ilana Berger and Lolli Ellinger of **Caring Majority**; John O'Malley of **CWA 1180**; Shelby Lohr, **Daycare Council NY**; Shoshana Hershkowitz, **Empire State Campaign for Child Care**; Clyanna Lighbourn of the **League of Women Voters Democracy During Detention Campaign**; Seher Khawaja, **Legal Momentum**; Isabela Seda, **New Hour Long Island**; Allie Bohm, **NYCLU**; Joan Gerhardt, **NYSCADV**; and Georganna Hanson of **Planned Parenthood Empire State Acts**.

A key budget priority for PowHerNY Network is the **Care Economy Workforce** and specifically funding in the budget for workers in child care and home care sectors. Blue Carreker explained that "our state and our country have long depended on women to provide care for children, the homebound and those with serious illness so that others can go to work. In fact, this workforce underpins our economy and keeps our businesses and communities stable. But this workforce has always been underpaid, and often disrespected. Today the Care Economy workforce demands long hours, physical labor and professional training. But we too often still

treat these workers like baby sitters. Because they represent such a huge percentage of women who work, their low wages are a major factor in pay inequity and female poverty.”

Lolli Edinger, a Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP) worker and member of the Caring Majority campaign, took time to travel from New York City in order to talk directly with lawmakers about the **Home Care Savings and Reinvestment Act** ([A.2018 \(Paulin\)](#) / [S.2372 \(Rivera\)](#) which was not included in either One House Budget. Edinger said that “CDPAP is a lifeline for New Yorkers in need of home care, and provides hundreds of thousands of caregiving jobs. We need and deserve to know what has happened to the money the Governor gave to private equity-backed PPL(Public Partnership LLC) to operate this critical program; this information remains hidden from lawmakers and the public. The Governor continues to claim the new system saved New York \$1.2 billion dollars, but no details have been provided to back this claim. Home care workers, consumers, and advocates are urging Albany leaders to include language requiring oversight of PPL in the budget to protect both essential services and public dollars.

Shoshana Hershkowitz joined the PowHerNY Network Lobby Day representing The Empire State Campaign for Child Care. She carried a message of cautious hope based on the Senate One House Budget’s inclusion of \$500 million for a **Workforce Retention Grant** program. “We commend the Senate for recognizing the urgent need to invest in the child care workforce,” said Hershkowitz. Child care educators—the vast majority of them women and predominantly women of color — provide an essential service, yet for too long have been among the lowest paid professions in the state. The Senate’s proposed investment is an acknowledgment of early childhood educators’ invaluable contribution, and will increase the wages of the existing workforce, help to retain staff, and allow providers to expand availability and support for families who depend on child care. We urge New York leaders to include at least \$500 million in the final budget for the child care workforce, along with language that makes this fund permanent and the compensation supplements ongoing. This is a necessary provision if New York is to achieve the goal of universal child care across the state.”

Other advocacy groups from the PowHerNY Network were also carrying positive messages based on the Senate’s One House budgets. Joan Gerhardt, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy at the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, said: “For too long, **domestic violence advocates** have been under-paid and under-valued. Despite their years of training, many do not make a living wage. Worse, they have never received a COLA or recent salary adjustment made available to other human services workers on state contracts. This year, though, Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Senator Persaud and other Senate leadership extended **salary increases to these critical safety net workers** in their one-house budget.”

And **Jessie Fay Parrott from the Human Services Council** spoke for the Network Partner organizations when she told legislative leaders, “ We are thrilled to see a 4% TII included in both House Bills as well as the inclusion of historically excluded programs to the TII in the Senate Bill. The human services nonprofit sector is majority women and specifically women of color. These individuals are qualified professionals who on average get paid 30% less than their equivalent government counterparts. The TII and program inclusion are important victories towards the ultimate goal of pay equity and addressing longstanding discriminative gaps for a workforce predominantly women and women of color. “

While not a budget issue, Network representatives also expressed strong support for the **Benefits Transparency Act (A.5906 (Bores)/S.5990 (Ramos))** as another key issue for women in the workforce. PowHerNY’s Equal Pay Campaign Co-Chair Seher Khawaja who is Director of Economic Justice at Legal Momentum, declared "Women workers power our economy, yet their labor remains deeply undervalued with too many women of color making a fraction of what white men make. A comprehensive gender justice agenda includes solutions to eradicating unacceptable wage and opportunity gaps and barriers that persist in our state. This session, New York can make our pay equity laws more effective by expanding the requirement for salary ranges in job postings to include transparency around benefits and non-cash compensation for jobseekers and current employees. Closing the wage gap will translate into greater earnings to pay for everyday necessities and making New York more affordable."

The PowHerNY Network is also focused on reproductive justice and bodily autonomy. Robin Chappelle Golston, President + CEO of Planned Parenthood Empire State Acts explained that “as attacks on reproductive and gender-affirming care escalate across the country, New York must meet this moment and lead on gender equity. That means investing in access - increasing funding for the **Reproductive Freedom and Equity Program** and establishing the **Gender-Affirming Care Access Program (A.8841 (Gonzalez-Rojas) / S.7924 (Gonzalez)** . We’re proud to stand with PowHer to demand a New York where abortion care and gender-affirming care are accessible, affordable, and protected for everyone who needs it.”

Katharine Bodde, interim co-director of policy at the New York Civil Liberties Union explained why many of the bills supported by the PowHerNY Network are a direct response to what is happening at the federal level. “As bodily autonomy -- and our communities -- face existential threats from the Trump administration, New York must ensure that everyone can safely access the care they need to live and thrive in their bodies. That’s why the NYCLU is proud to join PowHer, in urging lawmakers to pass the **Gender Affirming Care Access Program, Hospital Transparency, Electronic Health Records Segmentation, and the New York Health Information Privacy Act**, among other priorities. Together, these bills will help safeguard access to reproductive and gender-affirming care and reaffirm New York’s role as a leader in protecting bodily autonomy.”

A final key area of the Network's Advocacy Day focus was **Civil Rights**, with Clyanna Lightborne representing the League of Women Voters **Democracy During Detention** campaign (A.2121 (Walker)/S.440 (Myrie)), and Isabela Seda from One Hour Long Island speaking on behalf of the **The CARE Act: Reproductive health access for incarcerated people** A.4879A (Kelles)/S.4583A (Salazar). The **New York Health Act** and **NY4All** are also included in the PowHerNY Network's 2026 priorities.

“When we are fighting for inclusive gender equity,” stated Blue Carreker, “we mean all women, in all fields, including immigrant women and those who are in jail or in prison. We all deserve to be treated with dignity, to have access to critical services, to receive equal pay for comparable worth, and to be free from gender and racially based violence and discrimination.”