



80 Maiden Lane, Suite 606, New York, NY 10038 | t: 212.430.5982 | f: 212.430.5983 | info@abetterbalance.org | abetterbalance.org

NEW YORK STATE WORKING FAMILIES' BILL OF RIGHTS

Families in New York are in a care crisis. With most mothers in the paid workforce, families are relying on both parents to be wage earners as well as caregivers. In fact, in New York two incomes are necessary for most families to stay afloat. Yet parents, and other workers who provide care for family members, have minimal access to paid leave or other workplace supports to address their families' needs. As a result, workers in New York are crunched between the competing demands of work and family and, in the worst cases, forced to make impossible choices between their jobs and their families' wellbeing.

The consequences of this care crisis are real. Families suffer: breadwinners earn less, cannot advance, lose their jobs or are forced to quit because of inflexible, outdated and discriminatory workplaces. Our economy also suffers: employees exit the workforce and struggle to reenter, and families with lost income stop spending and saving.

Ignoring the needs of working families is shortsighted and bad public policy that harms our economic competitiveness as well as our families. It is time for our public officials to recognize the real needs of working families.

Working New Yorkers have fundamental rights to care for themselves and their families without jeopardizing their economic security. Our priorities include:

THE RIGHT TO FAMILY LEAVE INSURANCE

Many New Yorkers cannot take time off to care for their family members without losing pay or risking job loss. New York should offer broader job protection for parents with a new child or the need to care for a sick relative. New York should also follow California's and New Jersey's lead and expand the temporary disability insurance (TDI) program, which provides benefits to workers with short-term disability, to also cover care for a new child or seriously ill or disabled relative. Most higher earning New Yorkers take it for granted that everyone has the ability to take time off when they or a family member is ill. But in New York City alone, more than 1.3 million workers lack a single day of paid sick leave. New York should guarantee a minimum number of paid sick days for personal or family illness. Finally, New York should consider providing parents with several hours of paid time off to handle their children's academic needs, such as parent-teacher conferences.

THE RIGHT TO A MEANINGFUL REMEDY FOR DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination that prevents pregnant women and caregivers from staying on the job is a significant threat to family economic security. It also thwarts women's advancement in the workplace: New York ranks 44th in the nation in women's labor force participation. Yet a dramatic rise in these cases, notably in New York, coupled with limited resources at state agencies, often makes enforcement difficult. New

York must explore every legal option to prevent discrimination against pregnant women and caregivers. Specifically, New York should pass a law making it unmistakably clear that pregnant workers are entitled to reasonable accommodations on the job for pregnancy, childbirth and related medical conditions. New York should also consider a law explicitly prohibiting discrimination on the basis of family responsibilities. Finally, New York must step up public education efforts to inform workers of their rights on the job, particularly their rights regarding pregnancy, the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and breastfeeding, and explore strategies to enhance enforcement of existing laws.

THE RIGHT TO FAIR PAY

Every dollar can make the difference for a family just scraping by. The persistent gender wage gap harms families, not just women. American women earn, on average, 77 cents for every dollar earned by a man. Mothers are hardest hit, earning on average only 60 cents of a father's dollar. Part-time workers, disproportionately women, face an additional wage penalty. New York should take the lead in strengthening protections against wage discrimination, especially by promoting wage transparency and prohibiting retaliation against employees for sharing salary information. New York should also ensure that part-time workers receive proportional pay and benefits. As a first step, New York should establish a task force to study the gender wage gap by sector with special attention to the motherhood penalty and issue policy recommendations.

THE RIGHT TO A FAIR WORK SCHEDULE

Flexible work arrangements are critical for workers struggling to succeed in the workplace while caring for their loved ones. They also help employers recruit and retain top talent, reduce turnover and enhance productivity. Children also benefit: when parents have access to workplace flexibility, they do better in school and recover more quickly from illness. Unfortunately, fear of negative consequences and stigma inhibit many workers from taking advantage of flexible work options. And unpredictable and rigid work schedules make it impossible for many, especially low-wage workers, to cope with child care or other family needs. Too often, these workers simply quit—exactng a costly toll on business. New York should lead the way in promoting workplace flexibility. As a first step, New York should develop incentives for employers to adopt flexible work and consider policies to allow workers the ability to refuse overtime, limit work hours, or create a predictable work schedule without penalty. New York should also explore legislation to outlaw last-minute and on-call scheduling, particularly in the retail sector.

Other campaigns we support:

THE RIGHT TO QUALITY, AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE

In New York, where more than 1.5 million children under age 5 receive care from someone other than a parent, high-quality, affordable child care is critical. Quality child care significantly impacts a child's social, physical and cognitive development. It is also good for our economy: for every dollar invested in quality care and learning programs, New York State generates \$1.86 in additional spending, creating jobs and supporting local economies. Despite these benefits, working families face desperate shortages and crushingly expensive care: the cost of child care in New York is rising by \$730 per year. To address these problems, New York must increase access to quality, affordable early care, education services and after-school care, and promote the recruitment and retention of a high-quality child care workforce.