

CQMC Coalition for Quality Maternity Care

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August 25, 2012

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Nadler:

On behalf of the Coalition for Quality Maternity Care (CQMC), a coalition of national professional, consumer, and human rights organizations that promote high quality maternity care for all women and newborns, we write to thank you for your efforts to address pregnancy discrimination and promote healthy pregnancies by championing the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (H.R.5647). The CQMC is proud to endorse this legislation that would promote the health and economic security of pregnant women, their babies, and their families.

Three-quarters of women entering the workforce will be pregnant and employed at some point. Some of these women—especially those in physically strenuous jobs—will face a conflict between their duties at work and the demands of pregnancy. While current law prohibits discrimination based on pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions and directs employers to treat pregnancy the same as other conditions that might limit an employee's ability to perform some job functions, these protections have proven inadequate. Despite the protections of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, pregnant women are still often treated *worse* than other workers who may be limited in their ability to perform certain aspects of a job.

A choice between working under unhealthy conditions and potentially losing income is no choice at all, so when pregnant women are denied reasonable accommodations, many are forced to continue in their jobs under unhealthy conditions, risking their own health and the health of their babies. For women who are forced out of the workforce because of their pregnancies, the stress associated with job loss can be devastating and can increase the risk of having a premature baby or a baby with low birth weight. In addition, women who work during pregnancy may be able to take longer periods of leave following childbirth, which in turn facilitates breastfeeding, bonding with and caring for a new child, and recovering from childbirth.

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act prevents employers from forcing pregnant women out of the workplace by placing them on leave or firing them altogether, and ensures that, where a minor job modification would allow a woman to continue working, an employer must provide it unless doing so would pose an undue hardship. While plenty of women are able to work through their pregnancies without any job modifications, those who cannot deserve the same right to a reasonable accommodation provided for other workers. This bill would empower women and provide clarity for employers about their responsibilities.

The CQMC applauds your leadership in this area and stands ready to help you to achieve the passage of H.R. 5647. If you wish to draw upon our assistance, please contact Patrick Cooney at (202) 347-0034 or via email at patrick@federalgrp.com.

Sincerely,

American Association of Birth Centers
American College of Nurse-Midwives
Amnesty International USA
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Black Women's Health Imperative
Childbirth Connection

International Center for Traditional Childbearing
Lamaze International
Midwives Alliance of North America
National Association of Certified Professional Midwives
National Partnership for Women & Families

