

A Better Balance
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a better
balance

the work and family legal center



2023 Celebrating Momentous Work-Family Victories & Putting the Law in Action

Together, we are building a future where every worker can care for themselves and the ones they love, without sacrificing their economic security. We are pleased to share our annual newsletter, with updates and highlights on A Better Balance's impact in 2023! We are so grateful for our community of supporters—your dedication to work-family justice truly makes a difference.

A BETTER BALANCE IN THE MEDIA

We are shaping the public conversation around workplace issues and the movement to value and support caregivers. In 2023, we were featured in more than 125 stories from national and local media outlets, from the *New York Times* to CNN, from the *Nashville Scene* to Colorado Public Radio. Here are just a few excerpts!



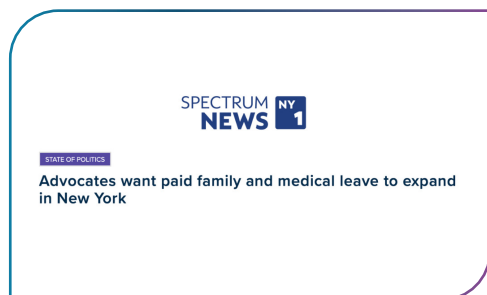
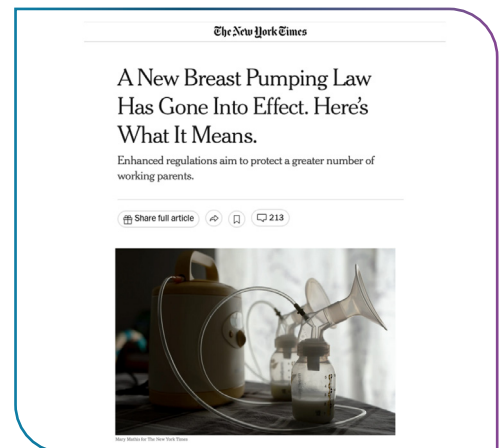
“ [Without the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act,] too often, women were forced off the job and faced devastating economic consequences when modest accommodations could help them continue working and supporting their families. We worked with women who wound up homeless or unable to support their families and put food on the table. It was just outrageous, and the law needed to be updated. —ABB Co-President Dina Bakst, CNN

“ ...The law is having a huge impact just a few months in. “Our call volume has skyrocketed,” said Marcella Kocolatos, managing attorney of direct legal services at A Better Balance. In the first week after the law went into effect the number of calls to the nonprofit’s free legal helpline tripled, with most of the callers asking specifically about the PWFA and how it could protect them.



“ “I think there is more of a recognition, especially with so many women in the workforce, that when you have a child, you need to take time off, if you have a serious illness, you should be able to take time off and you shouldn’t have to lose your job to do that,” said [ABB Co-President Sherry] Leiwant.

“ ...The PUMP Act was introduced in Congress in 2021. Support grew last summer amid the baby formula shortage... These events kicked off “a healthy debate” around the lack of institutional support for parents, said Sarah Brafman, a national policy director at A Better Balance, a nonprofit advocacy organization that helped draft the legislation.



“ The family legal advocacy organization A Better Balance on Thursday released a report outlining areas New York could bolster its existing paid family leave measure and its current gaps that could be adversely affecting LGBTQ people, people of color and military families as well as New Yorkers who are struggling with substance abuse.

We helped Minnesota and Maine pass paid family & medical leave, covering more than **3 million workers** with this important legal right!



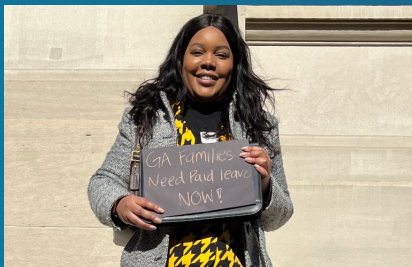
Momentum around paid family and medical leave policies at the state level has been steadily growing in recent years, and 2023 saw two exciting new victories. Earlier this year, Minnesota became the first state in the Midwest to pass a comprehensive paid family and medical leave law, which was soon followed by a victory in Maine. We are immensely proud to have worked tirelessly alongside local partners to make these victories a reality. We are also proud to support implementation efforts for the growing number of new paid leave programs across the country that we have helped to draft and pass, and to build on and strengthen existing paid leave programs, including in New York.

Although we continue to win new protections at the state level, 106 million workers nationwide still lack paid family and medical leave. We are working towards a future where all workers can benefit from the ability to take the time they need to care for themselves and the people they love, on the state level and by urging Congress to pass the federal FAMILY Act.



ABB Communications Associate Serena Devi (left) & VP Jared Make (right) present on inclusive family definitions in paid leave policies at the Creating Change conference.

ABB Senior Staff Attorney Kameron Dawson calls for paid leave for Georgia at Maternal Health Awareness Day at the Atlanta Capitol.



Report: "The Time Is Now: Building the Paid Family and Medical Leave New Yorkers Need"



Policies that provide paid family leave for state government employees to care for a new child and, in some cases, a seriously-ill family member, are critical steps forward in the movement for paid leave for all, particularly in the South. We've been proud to support many of these states—including Louisiana, Georgia, Tennessee, and Arizona—in getting public sector paid family leave policies across the finish line.

We're also proud that Tennessee passed paid parental leave for educators this year! ABB Community Advocate Kathryn, a TN public school teacher, played a key role in advocating for the legislation and sharing her story on navigating pregnancy loss with no access to paid leave.

With our support, **32 states** have passed policies providing paid parental or family leave to public sector employees.



ABB Legal Fellow Carmen McCoy (center-right) attends a press conference alongside Louisiana Governor Edwards as he enacts paid parental leave for state employees.



As the end of summer approached, I was consumed with worry about the economic impact on my family if I had to take unpaid leave... Tennessee teachers work incredibly hard to teach and take care of the children of our great state... No one should ever be put in that situation, but there I was, trying to preserve paid sick days so I could patch together a future paid maternity leave if I am lucky enough to carry another baby to term." —ABB Community Advocate Kathryn

We led the way to passage of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, covering **tens of millions of workers** in **all 50 states**.



ABB Co-Founder and Co-President Dina Bokst speaks at a rally calling for the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act in December 2022.



The A Better Balance team at the White House with ABB Community Advocates Armanda Legros, Lyndi Trischler, and Natasha Jackson—three of the fiercest champions for the PWFA!

As we know, laws are only effective if workers know they exist. We are in the midst of a massive campaign to educate pregnant and postpartum workers about their new federal rights, including with robust digital guides in both English and Spanish that explain the law and provide tools for speaking with one's employer. Our free and confidential work-family legal helpline has been a critical lifeline for workers seeking to understand and enforce their rights since the law took effect, and we have already directly assisted workers across 44 different states. It is clear that the PWFA is already changing lives—and we are committed to continuing to meet this unprecedented demand for our support as workers exercise their rights under this brand new federal law.

We have provided vital legal help and educated **hundreds of thousands of workers** about their rights under the new Pregnant Workers Fairness Act.



Know-Your-Rights Guide to the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act



Report: "Winning the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act"



When I received the call that my accommodation was approved I burst into tears. It felt like a load of bricks had been lifted off my chest. When I returned to work, I walked around with such pride and a high sense of dignity. I was finally able to enjoy my pregnancy and relax. I am able to contribute financially again, giving me my sense of self worth back. I no longer felt ostracized or incapable because I was pregnant." —Hannah*, caller to A Better Balance's free work-family legal helpline (*pseudonym)

We drove more than 8,000 comments to the EEOC from individuals urging for strong enforcement of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act.



Strong enforcement is key to ensuring the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act's vital protections are fully available to those who are depending on them. To that end, we made a vigorous push for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to issue strong regulations for the PWFA, submitting a detailed, 100-page comment providing recommendations based on our deep expertise and informed by the firsthand experiences of hundreds of workers. And, led by our Community Advocates with pregnancy discrimination stories of their own, we drove comments to the EEOC from thousands of individuals nationwide who support strong enforcement for the PWFA. We will continue to work with the agency to ensure the law is implemented and enforced equitably.



“I am so excited that the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act is going to help women all around the country... The law made clear that when I was pregnant I was still important, still able to do my job, I just needed this bit of help.”

—ABB Community Advocate Lauren, White House event speaker, June 27

Another federal law we are proud to have fought for, the **PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act**, went into effect this year!

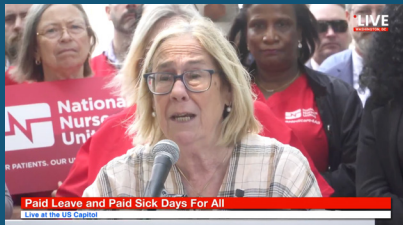
The PUMP Act closes gaps in federal law which meant workers in important industries like teaching, nursing, and agriculture were excluded from a federal right to private space and time to pump in the workplace. Together with the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, the PUMP Act will ensure breastfeeding workers nationwide have the support and protection they need to feed their babies and maintain their health, without risking their paycheck.

We secured rights for **9 million more nursing workers** to private space and time to pump milk under the PUMP Act.



For National Breastfeeding Month, we joined with the Honorable Carolyn Maloney (left) and partners to highlight new protections for expecting and new parents with a billboard in the country's busiest intersection—Times Square in New York City!

We're fighting to restore paid sick time rights to **over 1.8 million workers** in Michigan.



A Better Balance Co-President Sherry Leiwant speaks at a rally for the Healthy Families Act at the U.S. Capitol.

No worker should be forced to choose between their health and their paycheck. Sixteen states and dozens of jurisdictions now have paid sick time laws on the books, with Minnesota joining the list this year! But our work doesn't stop there. As we advocate for paid sick time on the state, local, and federal levels, we are also working to enforce these laws and defend workers' rights in the courts.

For example, in response to Southwest Airlines' refusal to follow Colorado's paid sick time law, we have joined with several litigation partners to represent TWU Local 556, the union that represents Southwest Airlines flight attendants. We are seeking to ensure that the State of Colorado stands behind its own paid sick time law and recognizes airline workers' right to legally-protected paid sick time. We are also supporting our Michigan partners in a case before the Michigan Supreme Court, which will determine if paid sick time rights are restored for more than 1.8 million workers. To that end, we recently submitted an in-depth amicus brief to the Court outlining the benefits of comprehensive paid sick time to workers, employers, and public health. State by state, locality by locality, on the federal level, and in the courts, we are fighting to secure and to protect workers' rights to paid sick time!

ABB's Southern Office Policy Manager Feroza Freeland speaks at Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable's legislative advocacy day.



A Better Balance is here to support workers nationwide in understanding and exercising their rights in the workplace as they care for themselves and the people they love.

In addition to sharing information about work-family protections with workers across the country via hands-on know-your-rights trainings and in-person outreach events, we have published and shared numerous digital resources with hundreds of thousands of workers nationwide, so they can access vital information about exercising their rights to state, local, and federal protections wherever they may be located.

We fielded calls from approximately **2,000 workers** via our free work-family legal helpline, providing direct, individualized support.



ABB Southern Office Policy Intern Berkley Bell tables an event in Georgia to share A Better Balance's know-your-rights resources.



Know Your Rights!

Workplace Rights Hub



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