



# Ivanka Trump's Report Card on Women's and Working Families' Issues

## Is Her Performance Living Up to Her Promises?

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One year ago, then-presidential candidate Donald Trump announced his intentions to add new policies on paid family leave and child care to his official platform.<sup>1</sup> These proposals reportedly were largely influenced by his daughter, Ivanka Trump, who actively campaigned to frame her father as a feminist and to pitch herself as a champion for working women and families.<sup>2</sup>

Today, with her father in the White House, Ivanka Trump holds an official role as advisor to the president, with an apparent portfolio that includes women's empowerment, women's entrepreneurship, and issues affecting working families.<sup>3</sup> She has also been touted as having a broader, more wide-ranging, and largely undefined role, which has placed her at the table with foreign dignitaries, business CEOs, and lawmakers. Her very visible presence in these varied settings has often put her at the center of the story, enhanced by a public narrative that depicts her as the moderating influence working behind the scenes in the White House, with immeasurable resources at her fingertips.

But, too often what has been missing from the conversation is a real-world understanding of women's lives, their everyday experiences, and the challenges they face. Ivanka Trump's sporadic forays into discussions about her issue priorities, more often than not, have been largely rhetorical with few details and little concrete analysis of the economic, racial, gender, ethnic, geographic, and other differences that can influence policy needs and outcomes. As a result, there has been virtually no tangible progress on any of the issues Ivanka Trump claimed that she would spearhead. Moreover, her recent support for actively rolling back progress on equal pay—one of the few instances where she has weighed in on a specific policy decision—sends mixed signals about her commitment to prioritizing the needs of all women, and her ability to craft the policy solutions essential to women's progress.<sup>4</sup>

On the heels of the president's daughter and key advisor asking for lowered expectations of what she can achieve, this report card assesses how well she has honored her promises to women and working families, and to map out ways to improve her work going forward.<sup>5</sup>

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## Grading methodology

The factors considered to evaluate Ivanka Trump's work include: how well she has deepened public understanding of key issues of critical importance to women and their families; whether she has effectively leveraged the power of government in support of women and families; whether she has sought to strengthen federal enforcement of women's legal rights and protections to ensure compliance with the law; whether she has advanced concrete policy solutions that recognize and respond to women's diverse experiences and challenges; and whether she has promoted transparency and improved processes to further systemic change. Most importantly, the authors evaluate whether she has achieved quantifiable positive or negative impacts on women at all different levels, or laid the groundwork for such results in the future.

Assigning a traditional letter or numerical grade is difficult, largely because there are few concrete actions to point to and Ivanka Trump has affirmatively sought to preempt criticism by arguing that she should be judged on only a small number of issues that she has identified.<sup>6</sup> But, her stated goal of addressing women's empowerment and women's equality cannot be accomplished effectively if reduced arbitrarily to one or two preferred issues. Indeed, women do not live in a vacuum, nor do they have the luxury of leading single-issue lives. Thus, this brief takes a holistic approach to examine the core issues that should be part of her stated agenda to help women lead healthy, productive lives and direct their own futures. Overall, the authors conclude that her inaction in many areas, combined with some key policy missteps, call for a failing grade. There are still, however, opportunities for change and progress, both of which women sorely need. The authors' assessment of her work is outlined below.

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## Paid family and medical leave

One of the few issues that she has identified as a priority is paid family leave. Her initial approach was to focus narrowly on paid maternity and then paid parental leave, and ignore other types of family or medical care needs.<sup>7</sup> President Trump mentioned paid parental leave in his joint address to Congress, and the administration's 2018 budget purports to include funding for a paid parental leave plan. But in its current form, the plan functionally would not work and is set up to fail.<sup>8</sup> The proposal is woefully underfunded with little federal investment, and relies on states to pick up the bulk of cost for providing leave through already cash-strapped state unemployment insurance (UI) systems. In addition to not working on a structural level, the Trump administration's paid

parental proposal is neither sufficiently inclusive nor protective.<sup>9</sup> It does not cover family caregivers and workers needing personal medical leave, even though they have been the vast majority of workers taking unpaid leave for family or medical reasons.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the average wage UI replacement rate has been persistently low, creating serious doubts about whether the level of wage replacement provided will be sufficient to support a new parent on leave.

In this sole instance, we have assigned two grades—one for effort and one for execution. The grade for effort acknowledges her work to raise the importance of paid family and medical leave, but responds to the inadequacies of her approach to limit her focus to a small cohort of caregivers and ignore broader needs. The grade for execution responds to the structural flaws in the actual proposal and the likelihood that the plan, if adopted, could do more harm than good.

**Grade: D- (effort)**

**Grade: F (execution)**

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## Child care

During the 2016 presidential campaign, Ivanka Trump touted a child care plan designed to benefit wealthy people like her.<sup>11</sup> A recent CAP analysis shows that in Trump swing counties—which are generally blue-collar and rural—Ivanka Trump’s plan would only save voters roughly \$5 per year on child care expenses. Meanwhile, the plan would hand wealthy families living in her former Manhattan neighborhood \$7,000 in tax cuts. Since taking office, the Trump administration has yet to put out a serious child care plan. In fact, Trump’s budget did not include any additional funds for child care programs and cut spending on afterschool programs, on-campus child care for students, and child care assistance for low-income working families.<sup>12</sup>

**Grade: F**

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## Equal pay

Ivanka Trump has frequently touted fair pay as a hallmark of women’s progress, and even praised Germany’s new pay transparency law at the W20 Summit in April.<sup>13</sup> The reality is that the Trump administration has not only shown that equal pay is not a priority, but they have actively rolled back progress on the issue. They rescinded the Obama administration’s 2014 Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces executive order, and the Trump budget proposes to eliminate agency funding that is critical for effective equal pay enforcement.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, there are countless things Ivanka Trump could be doing right now to promote equal pay. At the top of the list is pushing the Obama administration’s EEO-1 executive

action over the finish line.<sup>15</sup> The revision to the EEO-1 form, which would require large employers to provide pay data broken down by sex, race, and ethnicity, is one of the most critical equal pay actions taken in recent years. In late August, however, the Office of Management and Budget halted implementation of the EEO-1 change, with Ivanka Trump's explicit blessing.<sup>16</sup> Stalling the ability of federal enforcement agencies to access pay data undermines vigorous enforcement of equal pay laws, and is a step backwards for women, particularly women of color, who continue to experience pay disparities.

**Grade: F**

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## Entrepreneurship

Ivanka Trump's most vocal effort to empower women through entrepreneurship has been her spearheading the development of the Women's Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi), a new World Bank fund designed to increase women's access to business ownership internationally.<sup>17</sup> But both her role in the fund as well as whether it will be effective raises more questions than answers, including whether she has any authority over the project and whether the fund has the appropriate measures to ensure it will be effective in reaching low-income women, using best practices, and not crowding out private investment.<sup>18</sup> Domestically, the budget will also completely eliminate the Economic Development Administration and the Minority Business Development Agency, despite evidence that has continually shown that women and minorities are underserved by private-sector small business services. The federal government should be using the tools at their disposal to ensure that women get access to capital, including continuing to implement Dodd-Frank Section 1071.<sup>19</sup>

**Grade: D-**

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## Fair scheduling

Unfortunately, Ivanka Trump has not taken any action on the need for fair and predictable scheduling for working families. She has, however, shown how out-of-touch she is with the crises that an unfair or unpredictable schedule can create in working women's lives.<sup>20</sup> In her book, "Women Who Work," she writes that she strives to "keep Saturday and Sunday as unscheduled as possible" for family time and to avoid unnecessary worry that can result from having a "sick babysitter." But this statement—paired with her lack of focus on low-wage workers, unpredictable scheduling, and multiple job holders—reveals that she is either unaware or does not care that weekends often do not exist for women who work multiple jobs, or who can be scheduled at the last minute in many service, retail, and other occupations.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the worry and fear caused by a cancelled babysitter or unexpected shift are not just "counterproductive emotions" for

most working parents; these situations can get many workers fired and cause financial upheaval.<sup>22</sup> If Ivanka Trump truly defines a “well-lived life” as including “spending the mornings and evenings” with her husband and kids, then taking action to extend the same rights and predictability to other women who work should be a top priority.<sup>23</sup>

**Grade: Incomplete**

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### Earned sick and safe days

Similar to fair scheduling, Ivanka Trump has largely ignored the critical and complementary role earned sick and safe days also play in working families’ lives. Unlike the latitude she has enjoyed at work, more than one-third of private-sector workers cannot earn a single paid sick day to care for a sick child, or to recover from their own illness, let alone take a paid safe day to recover and seek help after an incident of sexual or domestic violence.<sup>24</sup> And workers like Ivanka Trump—who are in the highest earnings quartile—are more than double as likely to be able to earn sick days as employees in the lowest earnings quartile.<sup>25</sup>

**Grade: Incomplete**

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### Affordable Care Act

The Affordable Care Act and all the protections it has extended to women has been under constant threat since Donald Trump’s inauguration. Under the plans her father has supported, women could lose access to affordable contraception and other preventative health services, front-line women’s health care provider Planned Parenthood would be defunded, private insurance coverage of abortion would be denied, pregnant women would see pregnancy and maternity care costs skyrocket, and being a woman would, once again, be a pre-existing condition.<sup>26</sup> Throughout this process, Ivanka Trump has failed to speak up for women across the country.

**Grade: F**

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### Global women’s health

One of the first actions the Trump administration took was a blow to women’s health worldwide: to reinstate and expand the Mexico City Policy.<sup>27</sup> Also known as the Global Gag Rule, this executive order bars all U.S. foreign aid from supporting abortion care, referrals to abortion providers, or even education on abortion. To make matters worse, the Trump administration also eliminated funding for international family planning and

reproductive health programs in the federal budget and eliminated the U.S. contribution to the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA).<sup>28</sup> UNFPA is a vital provider of health services for women in conflict-afflicted areas, as well as critical sexual and reproductive health services for young people, and maternal health care, among other things. These actions will impact millions of women seeking comprehensive healthcare worldwide, and puts their ability to escape poverty or thrive in jeopardy. Despite her purported support for international women's empowerment, Ivanka Trump has remained silent on these issues.<sup>29</sup>

**Grade: F**

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## LGBTQ equality

The Trump administration promised to be a steward of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) equality, yet their policy agenda and personnel appointments have taken clear aim at LGBTQ workers and families.<sup>30</sup> The president issued an executive order that could be used to harm LGBTQ people across the country, including the possibility of undermining protections for the roughly 30 million employees in the federal contracting workforce who might face discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.<sup>31</sup> In July, the president told transgender service members that they could no longer serve in the armed forces, the nation's single largest employer of transgender people.<sup>32</sup> On the same day, Trump's Justice Department argued in court briefs that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act does not protect workers from discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation.<sup>33</sup> While Ivanka has tweeted general support for the LGBTQ community, she has failed to halt or condemn any of her father's administration's harmful actions.

**Grade: F**

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## Education

In July, Candice Jackson, the deputy assistant secretary for strategic operations and outreach in the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, said that 90 percent of sexual assault allegations on college campuses "fall into the category of 'we were both drunk.'"<sup>34</sup> Shortly after, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos held a Title IX summit to discuss how to best address sexual assault on college campuses. During the summit, she met with men's rights activists who have blamed victims for incidents of domestic violence and incorrectly claim that rape is over-reported: Just 12 percent of campus survivors report incidents of rape, and only 2 to 10 percent of rape reports are false or recanted.<sup>35</sup> Critical survivors and Title IX advocates were largely missing or shut out of these conversations, and in September, DeVos announced that the

Department of Education will be rewriting the Obama-era guidelines on enforcing Title IX.<sup>36</sup> These actions may make college campuses safer for rapists, and more dangerous for survivors.

Women cannot have equal access to quality education if they live in constant fear of their seeing their assailant on campus, or they are threatened by their universities for reporting. Moreover, experiencing sexual violence can gravely jeopardize women's economic security.<sup>37</sup> Yet, Ivanka Trump—putative White House champion for women's empowerment and economic security—has yet to speak up against the Department of Education's regressive and cruel agenda.

The White House recently announced an effort to pledge \$200 million in government grant funding for K-12 science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and computer science education, accompanied by \$300 million in private sector contributions.<sup>38</sup> While more support for STEM programs is a positive step, many of the details on the program's actual funding and design are not yet clear and thus could not be assessed at the time of this report. In particular, there are not enough public details available to evaluate what steps, if any, will be taken to promote greater girls' participation in generally higher-paying science and technology fields, in which women are typically less likely to work. Neither are there public details on how the White House plans to combat the barriers and biases that women and girls often face by working in STEM.<sup>39</sup>

**Grade: F**

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## Trump budget

The Trump administration's ghastly 2018 federal budget would, among other things: slash child care assistance; take \$200 million away from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); cut before- and after-school programs that help parents go to work; slash Head Start; reduce funding for the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program by \$50 million; reduce funding for the U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau by 75 percent; and cut funding for nurse training programs that disproportionately benefit women.<sup>40</sup> In addition, the proposed budget would also cut Medicaid by more than \$1 trillion—which would disproportionately hurt women, people of color, and low-income families, and take away food assistance from millions of families.<sup>41</sup> Nutrition assistance helps nearly 20 million children every month—and two-thirds of people receiving nutrition assistance live in families with children.<sup>42</sup> All of these cuts will hamper Ivanka Trump's purported commitment to women's empowerment, yet she remained silent throughout the budget process.

**Grade: F**

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## Federal responsibility to promote equality and uphold women's rights

Government plays a critical role to ensure that women have the same ability as men to participate fully in different aspects of society. Federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Labor and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission are charged with promoting equal opportunity and protecting against sex discrimination. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services administers key programs that provide food and nutrition support for women, infants, and children. The U.S. Department of Education is responsible for enforcing laws prohibiting sex discrimination in schools so that young women and girls have equal access to learning opportunities that can shape their futures. Heads of these agencies, such as the labor secretary, strongly influence agency priorities, so it is important to collaborate and coordinate with agency leadership to drive a pro-women agenda.<sup>43</sup>

The White House can—and should—play a leadership role in marshaling the collective resources of government to examine and address the different challenges facing women and girls. However, there is little evidence that Ivanka Trump has created such an infrastructure or mobilized government agencies to pursue supportive policies in a coordinated, concrete manner. Meanwhile, the White House Council on Women and Girls, established during the Obama administration, has been dormant since inauguration with no apparent replacement.<sup>44</sup> Playing the role of a figurehead without real content is ineffective and a poor use of government resources.

**Grade: F**



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## Conclusion

Ivanka Trump has branded herself as a supporter of women's empowerment and has positioned herself as the point person on women's issues within the Trump administration. Yet, she also wants the luxury of only being judged based on her work on a few signature issues while ignoring the breadth of women's challenges and the very real impact of the administration's actions on women's lives. But she cannot have it both ways. Women do not lead single-issue lives and a women's empowerment agenda driven by the White House cannot continue to ignore the diverse realities that all women bring to the table—from women of color, to LGBTQ women, women with disabilities, immigrant women, and women of different religious, educational, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Ivanka Trump has the opportunity to be a force for policies that help women. But so far, her work has amounted to little more than photo ops and tweets, and she has failed to articulate a set of concrete policy solutions to address women's diverse experiences and challenges. If she wishes to improve her performance, there are countless actions that she could take on policy issues—not to mention truly leveraging the full resources of the federal government to make progress on paid leave, equal pay, child care, women's entrepreneurship, fair scheduling, paid sick days, the budget, and other issues addressed in this report card.<sup>45</sup> Ivanka Trump must advocate for all women—not just women like her, if she hopes to meet the promises that she made to working families and to women across the United States. It is time for her to create comprehensive solutions to address the diverse needs of all women, and push back on the Trump administration's misogynist agenda.

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