



Fast Facts: Economic Security for Pennsylvania Families

By Ryan Erickson and Danielle Corley

In Pennsylvania and across the United States, we need policies that promote economic security for women and families. Working families need higher livable wages; women need and deserve equal pay for equal work; and parents need to be able to maintain good jobs that allow them to work and raise their children simultaneously. Strong economic security policies will enable Pennsylvania women and families to get ahead—not just get by.

For most Pennsylvanians, the days of the stay-at-home mom are history: Mothers are the primary or co-breadwinners in 65.3 percent of Pennsylvania families.¹ This is not surprising since most women in the state work—nearly 7 in 10 Pennsylvania women are in the labor force.² Significantly, the rise in women's earnings has had a strong counter-vailing force on the growth of income inequality over the past 50 years. Between 1963 and 2013, income inequality among the bottom 95 percent of Pennsylvania married couples grew 33 percent. But without the rise in women's labor force participation and earnings during those 50 years, income inequality would have grown 45 percent.³

In order to promote women's economic security, Pennsylvania's policies should address the needs of working mothers and reflect the roles that women are playing to provide for their families. Here are seven areas in which policymakers and advocates can help women bolster their families' economic security.

Expand access to paid sick days

Everyone gets sick, but not everyone is afforded the time to get better. Many women go to work sick or leave their sick children at home alone because they fear that they will be fired for missing work. Allowing employees to earn paid sick days helps keep families, communities, and the economy healthy.

- About 40 million U.S. employees, or 40 percent of the nation’s private-sector workforce, do not have access to paid sick days.⁴ Two major cities in Pennsylvania—Philadelphia and Pittsburgh—have taken the lead in providing paid sick days to all employees.⁵ However, these laws should be extended state wide to ensure all workers in the state have access.
- If employees must stay home from work because they or their children are ill, the loss of pay can take a serious toll—particularly on low-income workers, who are the least likely to have access to paid sick leave.

Provide paid family and medical leave

Access to paid family and medical leave would allow workers to be with their newborn children during the crucial first stages of a child’s life, to care for an aging parent or spouse, or to recover from their own illness.

- The United States is the only developed country that does not guarantee access to paid maternity leave and one of only three developed countries that do not offer broader family and medical leave insurance.⁶ Only 12 percent of workers in the United States have access to paid family leave through their employers.⁷
- The National Partnership for Women & Families gave Pennsylvania a “D-” on policies that help parents of newborn children. Pennsylvania law does not expand upon federal rights or protections for new and expecting parents who work in the private sector.⁸

Ensure equal pay

Although federal law prohibits unequal pay for equal work, there is more to do to ensure that both women and men enjoy the fullest protections against discrimination across Pennsylvania.

- Women are the primary, sole, or co-breadwinners in nearly two-thirds of U.S. families but continue to earn less than their male counterparts.⁹ Latinas and African American women experience the sharpest pay disparities.¹⁰
- Pennsylvania women earn just 79.2 cents for every dollar that Pennsylvania men earn.¹¹ The wage gap is even larger for black women and Latinas in Pennsylvania, who respectively earn 68.2 cents and 55.9 cents for every dollar that white men earn.¹²

Expand quality, affordable child care

Families need child care to be able to work, but many families lack access to high-quality child care options. Parents want and need child care that supports young children’s development and adequately prepares them for school.

- Sixty-eight percent of Pennsylvania children younger than age 6 have all available parents in the workforce, which makes access to affordable, high-quality child care a necessity.¹³
- For a Pennsylvania family with one infant and one 4-year-old, child care costs an average of \$21,106 per year, or more than one-third of the median income for a Pennsylvania family with children.¹⁴
- The high cost of child care can result in workers, typically women, taking time out of the workforce to care for young children. Yet, there are hidden costs to this decision: A typical woman worker in Pennsylvania who leaves the workforce for five years to become a full-time caregiver would lose \$466,571, or about a 19 percent reduction in her lifetime income, including lost retirement assets and benefits, lost wage growth, and lost wages for the years she spends out of the workforce.¹⁵
- Under the Center for American Progress' High Quality Child Care Tax Credit, families in Pennsylvania would, on average, save \$7,270 annually compared with current child care costs.¹⁶ CAP's proposal would also create a financial incentive for child care providers to improve their quality, therefore expanding access to high-quality child care programs for Pennsylvanians.

Increase the minimum wage

Women make up a disproportionate share of low-wage workers, and raising the minimum wage would help hardworking women across Pennsylvania better support their families.

- Women make up nearly two-thirds of all minimum wage workers in the United States.¹⁷
- Increasing the minimum wage to \$12 per hour would boost wages for 831,000 women in Pennsylvania and nearly 20 million women nationally.¹⁸ Almost 60 percent of the workers in Pennsylvania who would be affected by raising the minimum wage to \$12 are women.¹⁹

Guarantee access to quality health care

Women need comprehensive reproductive health services—including access to abortion care—in order to thrive as breadwinners, caregivers, and employees.

- In 2013, 759,140 Pennsylvania women were in need of publicly supported family planning services and supplies.²⁰
- Because federal Title X funding—which covers contraception, pregnancy testing, and cancer screenings—has not kept up with inflation and often faces the threat of cuts at the federal level,²¹ Pennsylvania should step in and ensure that women have access to quality family planning resources.²²

Promote women's political leadership

Across the United States, women are dramatically underrepresented in political office: They make up 51 percent of the population but only 29 percent of elected officials.²³

- Women make up 51 percent of Pennsylvania's population but only 31 percent of its elected officials.²⁴
- Women of color make up 11 percent of the state's population but only 4 percent of its officeholders.²⁵

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Endnotes

- 1 Data are taken from Sarah Jane Glynn and Jeff Chapman's analysis of Miriam King and others, "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 3.0," available at <https://cps.ipums.org/cps/index.shtml> (last accessed August 2016).
- 2 Sarah Jane Glynn's analysis of Miriam King and others, "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 3.0."
- 3 Brendan Duke's analysis of data from Sarah Flood and others, "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 4.0," available at <https://cps.ipums.org/cps/index.shtml> (last accessed January 2016).
- 4 Elise Gould, Kai Filion, and Andrew Green, "The Need for Paid Sick Days: The lack of a federal policy further erodes family economic security" (Washington: Economic Policy Institute, 2011), available at <http://s4.epi.org/files/temp2011/BriefingPaper319-2.pdf>.
- 5 A Better Balance, "Overview of Paid Sick Time Laws in the United States" (2016), available at <http://www.abetterbalance.org/web/images/stories/Documents/sickdays/factsheet/PSDchart.pdf>.
- 6 International Labour Organization, "Maternity and paternity at work: Law and practice across the world" (2014), available at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/-dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_242615.pdf; Jody Heymann and others, "Contagion Nation: A Comparison of Paid Sick Day Policies in 22 Countries" (Washington: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2009), available at <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-sick-days-2009-05.pdf>.
- 7 Bureau of Labor Statistics, *National Compensation Survey* (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015), Table 32, available at <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2015/ownership/private/table32a.pdf>.
- 8 States' grades in this assessment reflect the degree to which a state's laws improve upon federal law. See National Partnership for Women & Families, "Expecting Better: A State-by-State Analysis of Laws That Help New Parents" (2016), available at <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/expecting-better-2016.pdf>.
- 9 Sarah Jane Glynn, "Breadwinning Mothers, Then and Now" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2014), available at <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Glynn-Breadwinners-report-FINAL.pdf>.
- 10 Anna Chu and Charles Posner, "The State of Women in America: A 50-State Analysis of How Women Are Faring Across the Nation" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2013), available at <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/StateOfWomen-4.pdf>.
- 11 National Women's Law Center, "The Wage Gap, State by State," available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/wage-gap-state-state/> (last accessed August 2016).
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 "Available parents" refers to "resident parents." See, Kids Count Data Center, "Children Under Age 6 with All Parents in the Labor Force," available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5057-children-under-age-6-with-all-available-parents-in-the-labor-force#detailed/2/2-52/false/869,36,868,867,133/any/11472,11473> (last accessed August 2016).
- 14 Child Care Aware of America, "State Child Care Facts in the State of: Pennsylvania" (2016), available at <http://usa.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Pennsylvania.pdf>; Kids Count Data Center, "Median Family Income Among Households With Children," available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/65-median-family-incomeamong-households-with-children#detailed/2/40/false/869,36,868,867,133/any/365> (last accessed August 2016).
- 15 Note: For the purposes of this exercise, we assume that the individual entered the workforce at age 21 and will leave the workforce for five years beginning at age 26. CAP analysis is based on state-by-state median income for men and women from ages 21 to 31 from the 2014 Center for Economic and Policy Research American Community Survey Uniform Data Extracts. See ceprDATA, "ACS Uniform Data Extracts," available at <http://ceprdata.org/acs-uniform-data-extracts/> (last accessed August 2016). Analysis uses National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 cohort data from 1979 to 2012. See, NLS Investigator, "National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979," available at <https://www.nlsinfo.org/investigator/> (last accessed August 2016). For more information, see Michael Madowitz, Alex Rowell, and Katie Hamm, "Calculating the Hidden Cost of Interrupting a Career for Child Care" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2016), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/report/2016/06/21/139731/calculating-the-hidden-cost-of-interrupting-a-career-for-child-care/>.
- 16 The cost reduction estimate assumes that the family using the credit is earning \$40,000 annually. See, Katie Hamm and Carmel Martin, "A New Vision for Child Care in the United States" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2015), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/report/2015/09/02/119944/a-new-vision-for-child-care-in-the-united-states-3/>.
- 17 National Women's Law Center, "Fair Pay for Women Requires a Fair Minimum Wage" (2015), available at <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/fair-pay-women-requires-fair-minimum-wage>.
- 18 Economic Policy Institute, "State Tables: Characteristics of workers who would be affected by increasing the federal minimum wage to \$12 by July 2020" (2015), available at <http://www.epi.org/files/2015/revise-minimum-wage-state-tables.pdf>; David Cooper, "Raising the Minimum Wage to \$12 by 2020 Would Lift Wages for 35 Million Workers" (Washington: Economic Policy Institute, 2015), Appendix A: Data tables, available at <http://www.epi.org/publication/raising-the-minimum-wage-to-12-by-2020-would-lift-wages-for-35-million-american-workers/>.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Jennifer J. Frost, Lori Frohwirth, and Mia R. Zolna, "Contraceptive Needs and Services, 2013 Update" (New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2015), available at <https://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/win/contraceptive-needs-2013.pdf>.
- 21 Rachel Benson Gold, "Going the Extra Mile: The Difference Title X Makes," *Guttmacher Policy Review* 15 (2) (2012): 13–17, available at <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/gpr/15/2/gpr150213.html>.
- 22 Through Adagio Health, the Family Health Council of Central Pennsylvania, Inc., the Family Planning Council, and Maternal and Family Health Services, Inc., Pennsylvania provides services using Title X funding. Because these programs are often vulnerable to cuts, however, Pennsylvania lawmakers should ensure that these programs are adequately funded. For more information on the Title X-funded programs in Pennsylvania, see National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association, "Title X in Pennsylvania: Improving Public Health and Saving Taxpayer Dollars" (2015), available at <http://www.nationalfamilyplanning.org/document.doc?id=570>.
- 23 Reflective Democracy Campaign, "Who Leads Us?," available at <http://wholeads.us/electedofficials/> (last accessed August 2016).
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.