



## **NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice Urges Yes Vote on The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act**

Dear Representative,

As you prepare to vote on H.R. 1065, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice urges you to vote yes. Our mission is to educate, organize, and advocate for economic and social transformation. For almost 50 years, we have been guided by Catholic Social Teaching, which tells us to place the needs of people at the socioeconomic margins at the center of our advocacy. Founded by women religious, we continue their legacy today by building a just society that ensures all people have what they need to live dignified lives. We are proud to have over 100,000 supporters across the country who share our passion for justice.

We enthusiastically support the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act because it modernizes current law and closes the gaps in protections afforded to pregnant workers. Our Executive Director, Mary J. Novak said:

“In just the fall of 2020, this critical legislation received more than 300 affirmative votes in the House and now is the time to show the same overwhelming support for pregnant workers. This common sense, bipartisan legislation is faithful to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching—and the dignity of the human person in particular—by caring for the health and economic security of pregnant people and their families. Forcing workers to choose between a healthy pregnancy and a paycheck is immoral and the PWFA ends this injustice. NETWORK Lobby calls on the House of Representatives to quickly send the PWFA to the Senate to support working people in the United States who are bringing new life into the world.”

In the aftermath of the pandemic and an economic recession, this legislation is urgently needed. Despite current protections included in the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 (PDA), over 37,000 pregnancy discrimination charges have been filed between 2010 and 2020 with the U.S Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). This demonstrates the gaps in protections afforded to pregnant workers under current law.

Pregnant workers are routinely denied basic, temporary accommodations to ensure a healthy pregnancy. These accommodations are often as simple as a stool to sit on, a break from lifting heavy boxes, schedule changes, and protection from dangerous conditions. These accommodations are especially important for women in jobs requiring physical activity or exposure to hazardous conditions. In lieu of reasonable accommodations at the workplace, many pregnant workers face undue pressures to take an often-unpaid leave of absence, which may jeopardize their livelihood.

While pregnancy discrimination effects many, Black and Brown workers carry a heavier burden as they disproportionately occupy jobs with low wages and few pre-existing benefits and protections. Low wage jobs are often more physically and emotionally demanding, which increase the risk for pregnancy complications. Black and Indigenous women are two to three times more likely to die from pregnancy complications compared to white women. We cannot allow this racial and gender inequity to continue and the PWFA takes a step towards ending this cruelty.

The reality of persistent discrimination in the workplace and the lack of clarity around employer obligations calls for new legislation to provide straightforward guidance for both employers and pregnant workers. Support for pregnancies means support for pregnant workers.

NETWORK Lobby proudly endorses the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act and we ask each member of the House of Representatives to recognize the dignity of life and work by voting yes.

Sincerely,

Gina Kelley

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice