



Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice Supports The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act

August 3, 2021

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

Our mission at NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice 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 in the 1970s, 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.

At NETWORK Lobby, we recognize that the basis for a dignified way of life begins with opportunity, inclusivity, and security in the workplace. As people of faith who cherish the dignity of work, we strongly support the **Pregnant Workers Fairness Act** (S. 1486).

As the Senate Committee considers the PWFA, we urge members to vote in the best interest of pregnant workers and their families. This common sense, bipartisan legislation modernizes current law and closes the gaps in protections afforded to pregnant workers. It would open doors for gainfully employed women who choose to bring new life into the world.

Despite protections against workplace discrimination in the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, over 37,000 pregnancy discrimination charges have been filed between 2010 and 2020 with the U.S Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). With these charges, it is clear that current law fails to fully protect pregnant workers.

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 environments. In lieu of reasonable accommodations at the workplace, many pregnant workers face undue pressure to take a leave of absence, which may jeopardize their livelihood.

While pregnancy discrimination affects 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 Pregnant Workers Fairness Act promotes healthy pregnancies, economic security for pregnant women and their families, and is faithful to Catholic Social Justice. Our faith calls us to respect the dignity of all those who are nurturing the life of persons created in God's image. The pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S Economy*, states clearly that, "human work has a special dignity and is a key to achieving justice in society." To create a just world for working women, we must recognize the dignity of labor.

NETWORK Lobby strongly urges all committee members to support the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act.

Sincerely,

Gina Kelley
Government Relations Specialist
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice