

Economic and Health Justice for Women and Families in Hawaii

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In Hawaii and across the country, policymakers must prioritize progressive policies that support women and families' economic security, health outcomes and overall well-being. Hawaii women need livable wages, supportive workplace policies such as paid family and medical leave, comprehensive health care access, and access to abortion – and they need a democracy that allows for their voices to be heard.

Paid Leave

- About 73 percent of working people in Hawaii do not have access to paid family leave. Sixty-nine percent of Hawaiians are unable to access unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act.¹
- Nationwide, nearly one third of all adults aged 55-64 — and 41 percent of older Black women and 43 percent of older Latinas — hold a physically demanding job, which may exacerbate or cause serious medical conditions that require care, particularly in older workers and disabled workers. In Hawaii, that would mean 37,300 older workers and 1,500 older Latina workers.²
- If women in Hawaii participated in the labor force at the same rate as women in peer countries with paid leave, there would be an estimated 18,000 additional workers in the state and \$652 million more wages earned statewide.³

57% OF AAPI MOTHERS IN

HAWAII ARE BREADWINNERS.

**— Paid Leave Means a Stronger
Hawaii**

Equal Pay

- Across the nation, women overall are typically paid 75 cents for every dollar paid to men.⁴ Hawaii women who were full-time, year-round workers earned only 88 cents for every dollar men in Hawaii earned in 2023.⁵ For Black women this gap is even larger – for every dollar that men earned in 2022 (the latest available data), Black women in Hawaii earned 76 cents.⁶

- Women’s wages support their households. In Hawaii, 57 percent of AAPI mothers are key family breadwinners.⁷

Child Care

- In Hawaii, full-time center-based infant care costs 20.1% of family median income.⁸

Student Loan Debt

- Women hold nearly two-thirds of Americans’ collective \$1.7 trillion of student loan debt. Black women are especially impacted by student loan debt – they hold more student debt than other demographics, with an average of \$38,800 in federal undergraduate loans a year after completing a bachelor’s degree.⁹ Hawaii has the 10th highest student debt per borrower, with a total student debt of \$4.7 billion owed across 123,700 borrowers across the state.¹⁰

Poverty

- In Hawaii, 10.2 percent of women 18 and over were experiencing poverty in 2022 – for Black women, that rate increased to 14 percent.¹¹

Health Justice

- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI) women made up 44 percent of the maternal mortality deaths from 2015-2017.¹²
- Hawaii is protective of abortion access.¹³
 - However, restrictions on reproductive health cost Hawaii more than 300 million in total average annual economic loss¹⁴

A Stronger Democracy

- Less than 37 percent of Hawaii’s state legislators are women. Women of color broadly make up 31.6 percent of Hawaii’s state legislature, the largest percentage in the country.¹⁵
- Hawaii is ranked 4th by the Cost of Voting Index, representing one of the least restrictive electoral climates in the country.¹⁶

Comprehensive policy solutions are necessary – and women and families in Hawaii cannot wait.

The following policy recommendations would support women and families’ economic security, health care access, and well-being in Hawaii and beyond.

- Family friendly workplace standards, including a common sense, national paid leave program
- Fair pay protections and practices
- A higher minimum wage and elimination of the tipped minimum wage
- Stronger protections for workers' rights to unionize
- Ensure access to abortions and comprehensive reproductive health care

¹ The National Partnership for Women & Families. (2024, February). *Paid Leave Means a Stronger Hawaii*. Retrieved 14 February 2024, from <https://nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/paid-leave-means-a-stronger-Hawaii.pdf>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Majumder, A., & Mason, J. (2024, September) *America's Women and the Wage Gap*. Retrieved 7 October 2024, from National Partnership for Women & Families website: <https://nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/americas-women-and-the-wage-gap.pdf>

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2023, Geographies: All States within United States and Puerto Rico, Table B20017: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months (in 2023 Inflation Adjusted Dollars) for the Population 16 Years and Over with Earnings in the Past 12 Months. Retrieved 12 September 2024, from <https://data.census.gov/> (Unpublished calculations based on those who worked full-time, year-round).

⁶ National Women's Law Center. (2024, March) *The Wage Gap by State for Black Women Overall — March 2024*. Retrieved 7 October 2024, from <https://nwc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Wage-Gap-State-by-State-Black-Women-3.1.24.pdf>

⁷ See note 2; Shaw, E., Mason, C. N., Lacarte, V., & Jauregui, E. (2020, May). Holding Up Half the Sky: Mothers as Workers, Primary Caregivers, & Breadwinners During COVID19. Retrieved 16 January 2024, from Institute for Women's Policy Research website: <http://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Holding-Up-Half-the-SkyMothers-as-Breadwinners.pdf>; "Key breadwinner" means a single mother who heads a household or a married mother who contributes 40 percent or more of the couple's joint earnings. Nationally, 79 percent of Black mothers, 64 percent of Native American mothers, 60 percent of mothers identifying as multiracial or

“other” race, 49 percent of Latina mothers, 48 percent of white mothers and 43 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander mothers are key breadwinners

⁸Gailey, A. (2024, October). *Study: Care for one infant costs at least 10% of a family's yearly income in 48 states*. Retrieved 29 October 2024, from <https://www.bankrate.com/banking/child-care-costs-by-state-study/#infant-care-costs-are-high>

⁹Jackson, V., & Williams, B. (2022, April). *How Black Women Experience Student Debt*. Retrieved 14 February 2024, from <https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/How-Black-Women-Experience-Student-Debt-April-2022.pdf>

¹⁰Coppock, J. (2024, March). *Student Loan Debt: What Explains the Disparities?* Retrieved 7 October 2024, from <https://www.degreechoices.com/blog/student-loan-debt-by-state/>

¹¹National Women's Law Center. (2023, October). *Women in Poverty, State by State*. Retrieved 7 October 2024, from <https://nwl.org/resource/women-in-poverty-state-by-state/>

¹²Maykin, M., Tsai, S. (2020, October). Our Mothers Are Dying: The current state of Maternal Mortality in Hawai'i and the United States. *Hawai'i Journal of Health & Social Welfare*, 79(10), 302-305

¹³Guttmacher Institute. (2024, January 24). *Interactive Map: US Abortion Policies and Access After Roe*. Retrieved 14 February 2024, from <https://states.guttmacher.org/policies/hawaii/abortion-policies>

¹⁴Institute for Women's Policy Research. (2024, January). *Updated Analysis of the Cost of Abortion Restrictions to States*. Retrieved 14 February 2024, from <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Updated-Analysis-of-the-Cost-of-Abortion-Restrictions-to-States-1.pdf>

¹⁵Frye, J., Goodman, S., & Haider A. (2023, November). *State Legislatures' Lack of Representation Threatens Freedom*. Retrieved 14 February 2024, from <https://nationalpartnership.org/report/democracy-abortion-access/>

¹⁶Schraufnagel, S., Pomante M., & Li Q. (2022, September). Cost of Voting in the American States: 2022. *Election Law Journal: Rules, Politics, and Policy* 21(3), 220-228, from <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/elj.2022.0041>

The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, reproductive health and rights, access to quality, affordable health care and policies that help all people meet the dual demands of work and family. More information is available at NationalPartnership.org.

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