



Five Steps Governments, Employers, and Non-Profits Can Take

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Research and the experience of other advanced nations shows that there are five straightforward steps governments, employers, and nonprofits can take to better support working women and their families.

First, legislators in Congress and the states need to **require paid maternity leave** for all employed mothers, including to women working for small businesses. The United States is the only industrialized country that does not offer such benefits, and paid leave is crucial to ensuring that women have adequate incomes and time to care for their newborns. Paid family leave is also beneficial to employers, because it reduces employee turnover.

Second, all workers must also have the **legal right to take sick days** to take care of themselves, their children, and elderly family members without risking the loss of their jobs. Guaranteeing workers the right to take sick days would not only help working women; it would likely improve public health by reducing the spread of viruses and contagious diseases from people who stay at work or return too soon while ill. This would benefit all Americans.

Third, non-profits and governments should **provide additional high-quality and affordable day care slots for young children along with after-school slots for children of working parents**. High costs and long waiting lists for child care are a common problem for families with children, and alleviating this problem is crucial if women are to stay in jobs and be successful at work. In addition, ensuring that all young children have access to high-quality child care is one of the ways for the United States to improve educational outcomes and reduce achievement gaps between children from low- and high-income families.

Fourth, working women and their families would benefit from **an increase in the federal minimum wage**. Many working women are paid at the minimum level, which has declined in real value over time, in effect cutting their wages and sharply restricting income growth. The minimum wage should be raised now and then set to rise automatically with the cost of living like Social Security benefits. Such steps would help to ensure that all workers are paid fairly for their labor. And the impact would be even greater if minimum wage protections are extended to cover workers in occupations that have previously been exempt, including tipped restaurant workers. Many women work in jobs that are not guaranteed the federal minimum wage, and as a result they are often left with low and unpredictable pay – which makes no sense at all in an era where most working women are crucial sources of support for their families.

Fifth and finally, employers should **ensure that their employees have predictable and regular work schedules**. Many workers in the service sector have hours that change unpredictably from week to week, making it difficult to budget for expenses and arrange child care and medical appointments. Workers with unpredictable schedules also find it hard to maintain family routines, such as regular family meals and consistent bedtimes for children, both of which are important for child wellbeing.