

Policy Position: Economic Opportunities

eliminating racism
empowering women

ywca

west central michigan

What We Believe

Equal pay, workplace fairness, and access to high-skill and high-wage jobs are essential to women's economic advancement in the 21st century. Many women function as the sole breadwinners within their families and take on the role of caretaker within and outside of the home. Working women also act as essential drivers of our nation's economy.

At YWCA, we believe no one should have to choose between their livelihoods and their health, their family, or their safety. Yet as a result of their dual roles as caregivers and primary financial providers, many women in the workforce, particularly women of color, are often forced to choose between their family's economic security and their health when they or their loved ones need care. Moreover, women continue to face the economic barriers of pay inequity, sexual harassment, and discrimination in the workplace. The intersecting public health, economic, and racial justice crises within the last decade have both revealed and exacerbated a depth of racial and gender inequity that has long existed in our nation with disproportionate impacts on many individuals and their families.

What We Know

- In 2018, Michigan had a nearly \$4,000 income gap between "Main-Street" business owners based on citizenship status. Gender and race impact business ownership and income as well. This can be seen in both Michigan's immigrant-owned and women-owned businesses, where white and U.S.-born women make up the majority of owners, respectively [1].
- In Michigan, LGBTQ+ employees, particularly those who identify as transgender, have reported incidents of discrimination based on their gender identity or expression. These include, "being forced to use a restroom that did not match their gender identity, being told to present in the wrong gender in order to keep their job, or having a boss or coworker share private information" about their gender identity without permission [2].
- "Latinx, Black, and mixed/other race residents of Grand Rapids experience poverty at rates that are about three times as high as their white peers" [3].
- According to recent estimates by the Michigan Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives, over 125,000 Michigan women have left the workforce entirely since February 2020, and the unemployment rate for women in Michigan has doubled since pre-COVID-19 [4].

- Michigan is one of only 12 states that currently require employers to provide paid sick leave to their workers; yet, this law only covers employers who employ 50 or more individuals. The law does not cover the following types of employees: government employees, workers whose primary work location is not in Michigan, workers exempt from overtime requirements under the Fair Labor Standards Act, workers employed by an employer for 25 weeks or fewer in a calendar year for a job scheduled for 25 weeks or fewer, and workers who worked on average less than 25 hours per week during the immediately preceding calendar year [5].

What We Support

At the federal, state, and local levels, the YWCA West Central Michigan seeks to educate, advocate, and urges policymakers to

- Work towards equal pay for equal work through the passage of legislation prohibiting the use of salary history in job interviews and negotiations, such as the Paycheck Fairness Act, and raising minimum and living wages.
- Uphold safe, fair, and inclusive workplaces free of discrimination and harassment.
- Support efforts to establish and expand paid family leave, paid sick leave, and job-protected safe leave.
- Expand access to training, career development, and educational opportunities in high-skilled, high wage, STEM, and other 21st-century work opportunities.

*Adopted by YWCA West Central Michigan Board of Directors
in February 2021*

[1] Victoria Crouse, "Immigrant Families in Michigan: A State Profile," Michigan League for Public Policy (October 2017) available at mlpp.org/immigration-issues/immigrant-families-in-michigan-a-state-profile

[2] *2015 U.S. Transgender Survey: Michigan State Report*. (2017). Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality.

[3] PolicyLink (2017). *An Equity Profile of Grand Rapids*. W.K. Kellogg Foundation. p. 25. Retrieved from www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/GrandRapids_final_profile.pdf

[4] Quealy, E., (11 February 2021) "Michigan Women's Commission releases results of statewide Survey on Child Care Use, continues to advocate for expanded child care option" Retrieved from www.michigan.gov/leo/0,5863,7-336-76741-551901-,00.html#:~:text=%E2%80%9CAccording%20to%20our%20recent%20estimates,Information%20and%20Strategic%20Initiatives%2C%20DTMB.

[5] Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (October 2019). *General Requirements-Paid Medical Leave Act*. Retrieved from https://www.michigan.gov/documents/lara/Paid_Medical_Leave_Act_Poster_644565_7.pdf