



Some Facts about the Pennsylvania Agenda For Women's Health

Inspired by New York State's Women's Equality Agenda and House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi's Economic Agenda for Women and Families, the Pennsylvania Agenda for Women's Health connects the dots between workplace, poverty and safety issues and women's health. The Pennsylvania Agenda, spearheaded by the bicameral, bipartisan, pro-choice Women's Health Caucus, is a group of bills aimed at leveling the playing field for women, eliminating discrimination in the workplace, amending workplace laws to include the needs of women, who are, after all, half the workforce (not to mention half the population), addressing housing and public assistance penalties for women living in poverty, and updating laws to ensure greater physical security for women. Follow the Agenda's progress at PennsylvaniaNOW.org.

Agenda Bills Include:

Workplace Accommodations for Pregnant Women – This bill would provide for common sense workplace changes that are temporary, for instance, allowing a pregnant worker to sit down occasionally, to carry a water bottle, and to get help lifting heavy objects.

Sanitary Conditions for Nursing Mothers – Breastfeeding is good for babies. It builds their immunity and it's protective of the mother's health as well. Employers should provide a private, clean space for mothers to express breast milk.

Equal Pay – Despite a law on the books since 1959, equal pay for equal work is still not a reality for women. Bills in the Agenda would add teeth to the existing law by updating legal standards for lawsuits, providing for stiffer penalties for wage discrimination, and ending pay secrecy, the practice of prohibiting employees from sharing how much they make.

Increased Eligibility for Breast and Cervical Cancer Screenings – This bill would expand the number of Pennsylvania women eligible for free cancer screenings by reducing the age requirement.

Protection for Victims of Domestic Violence – If a victim of domestic violence calls 911 too often, she can be evicted due to local “nuisance” laws. This bill would ban such laws. (Passed in 2014)

Stop Intimate Partner Harassment – This law bans publishing photos or video of another person who is naked or engaging in a sexual act without that person's consent. (Passed in 2014)

Patient Trust Act – This would prohibit politicians from intruding upon the doctor-patient relationship by prohibiting legislation that is not medically accurate, and that interferes with delivery of medical care.

Closing Gaps in Care for Our Women Veterans – This would establish a Task Force to look into the health issues effecting Pennsylvania's 80,000 female veterans.

Fighting Poverty – Many women and their families struggle week to week to make ends meet. One out of every five Pennsylvania child lives in poverty. Yet benefit levels for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) have not increased in 25 years, and the state has steadily been decreasing the number of families getting aid. Several bills would address issues of poverty for Pennsylvania families, including a bill to study the “cliff effect,” where minor increases in income means low-income families suddenly don't qualify for assistance or child care.

Fair Pensions for Widows of State and Municipal Employees – This bill would require spousal approval for any changes to a public employee's pension plan that impacts spousal benefits.

Extending Sexual Harassment Protections to All Pennsylvania Workplaces – This would extend the existing law to cover all employers in the state.