

# Policy Recommendations Overview

Texas has significant potential, but to fully realize it, focused investments in its women and families are crucial. These policy recommendations, coupled with robust public-private partnerships, intentional philanthropy and the recognition of the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender, and identity, are essential to creating equitable opportunities that enable women across Texas and fuel a thriving state economy. Texas lawmakers and business and community leaders can secure the state's economic future by analyzing the data in this report and acting on these recommendations.

## Promote Economic Participation for Texas Women

- Lawmakers should encourage policies that support women's full participation in the workforce by addressing systemic barriers, including the high cost of child care.
- Policymakers should recognize and mitigate the specific challenges single women and mothers in the workforce face by implementing paid family and medical leave initiatives, which will enable women to take time off for pregnancy, adoption, or medical care without sacrificing their work.
- Policymakers should develop and implement data-driven strategies to adapt to industry shifts across Texas, tailoring their efforts to regional demands to effectively support and enhance women's participation in the workforce.
- Industries experiencing a decrease in women's participation, such as the "information" industry, should invest in programming and systems that support and empower women to thrive in these fields.

## Enhance Workforce Equity Through Equal Pay

- Lawmakers can strengthen and rigorously enforce equal pay laws to ensure women, particularly women of color, are paid equitably across all sectors.
- State and federal lawmakers can increase the minimum wage in Texas to ensure all Texans earn a wage that sustains a living.
- Business and philanthropic leaders and policy makers can support education and training programs for women in the state, with a focus on preparing them for living-wage jobs.

## Provide Support for Women's Educational Advancement

- State legislators should address college affordability by increasing funding of TEXAS Grants and College Promise programs to support women, particularly women of color, who have been burdened by high student loan debts as they enter the workforce.
- State and federal policymakers can alleviate the burden of student loan debt for numerous Texans by expanding student loan forgiveness programs and canceling a set amount of debt.

## Invest in Universal and Subsidized Child Care Programs

- Lawmakers should commit to fully funding universal pre-K programs and expanding access to quality child care facilities, particularly in underserved areas.
- Legislators should increase subsidies for child care to lower-income families and provide incentives for child care providers to meet higher quality standards.
- Legislators can support home-based child care providers that offer flexibility to support working women and students with non-traditional work and school schedules.
- Employers can implement policies and work arrangements that support families, such as offering paid family leave, dependent care reimbursement accounts, flexible scheduling, remote working options, and empowering employees with more control over their work.

## Expand Health Coverage and Access

- Texas should join the majority of other states in expanding Medicaid access to adults in the coverage gap making below 138% of the FPL.
- Texas should use all available tools to streamline and simplify Medicaid and CHIP enrollment for women and their families by fixing policies that create a high administrative burden on the state and often result in incorrect coverage and care denials.
- Texas should re-institute funding for qualified enrollment assistance programs to help women navigate the correct health coverage and cost-savings options for their families.
- Texas should reinstate automatic enrollment from Medicaid for Pregnant Women into Healthy Texas Women and implement further measures to assist eligible postpartum mothers in retaining Medicaid coverage or moving to private or Affordable Care Act coverage for which they qualify. This will help eligible Texans retain coverage and avoid care gaps.
- Government and philanthropic organizations can support funding initiatives that ensure uninterrupted access to all contraceptive options for women, including long-acting methods.

## Support Working Women Through Paid Sick Leave Policies

- State and local legislators can make paid sick leave an earned benefit that is available to more working women, so they can go to the doctor or stay home when they or their children are sick.
- Similarly, private sector employers can enact policies to provide paid sick days. For women, the inability to earn paid sick days has particularly devastating consequences.

## Promote Housing Stability

- Texas can help increase homeownership for women of color by creating more affordable housing options and opportunities for economic advancement. State officials should support the creation of affordable rental units with larger numbers of bedrooms for families with children so that all women, but especially single mothers who are most likely to be cost-burdened, have a quality and affordable place to live.
- The state and philanthropic entities can allocate resources for legal mediation services for women and families facing eviction and aid families seeking property tax relief — two issues that disproportionately impact women of color.
- Public Housing Authorities and other community housing partners can prioritize the allocation of funds for transitional housing for survivors of family violence.
- Philanthropy can fund programs that support women's access to affordable and accessible housing and home ownership.

