



# WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY: COMMUNITY ACTION TOOLKIT



## About the CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)

CWEALF is a statewide, nonprofit organization that advocates for and empowers women and girls, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. CWEALF works to achieve an equitable society where women and girls thrive through legal education, public policy, and women's advancement and leadership.

## Why Is Women's Economic Security Important?

Policies that advance the economic security of women in Connecticut are critical to the wellbeing of our workforce and prosperity of our state's economy; however, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated gender and racial inequities in our state and nation.

Women, especially women of color, have felt the most severe financial, social, and emotional impacts of the COVID-19 public health crisis: women make up the majority of essential workers on the frontlines of the pandemic and risk their own health everyday to serve our communities and earn a paycheck. Women also continue to carry the majority of caregiving responsibilities in their families and juggle work with raising children or caring for loved ones during the pandemic.

Now more than ever, it's critical to use YOUR voice to influence change in our state. CWEALF created this guide as a tool for CT residents to learn more how to use their voices to enact change that will improve the economic security of women across the state. Together, we can make Connecticut a safer and more prosperous place to live for women and their families. [Read more about CWEALF's 2021 legislative priorities here.](#)

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## HOW TO: NAVIGATE THE CGA WEBSITE

The Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) is the state legislature of Connecticut. The CGA's purpose is to pass laws necessary for the welfare of our state. It is composed of the 151-member House of Representatives and the 36-member Senate, who each represent a specific district of the state.

The CGA website provides up to date information about what's happening at the legislature, proposed bills, events, and contact information for each House and Senate member of the CGA. Stay in the know by visiting: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/>

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Connecticut General Assembly website. At the top, four yellow callout boxes point to specific features: 'Find your legislator' points to the 'Representation' dropdown menu; 'Explore committees' points to the 'Committees' dropdown menu; 'Search the bulletin' points to the 'Bulletin' link in the 'CGA Daily Records' section; and 'Look up a bill & track a bill' points to the 'Bill Info' dropdown menu. A red note states 'Please note: The Capitol Complex is currently closed.' Below this is a video player for the State Capitol building. On the right, there are buttons for 'Broadcast Media', 'House Stream', 'Senate Stream', and 'CT-N'. At the bottom, the 'CGA Daily Records for Thursday, November 19, 2020' section is visible, with a yellow circle around the 'Bulletin (11/13)' link.

### 1. [Find your legislator.](#)

Find out who represents you at the State Capitol and learn more about your State Representative and/or State Senator, which bills they've cosponsored or voted in favor of and their membership on specific legislative Committees. Follow along through the CGA website to see which issues they are focusing on this session and learn how to contact them about your concerns.

### 2. [Look up a bill.](#)

Use the Bill by Subject function to find bills focused on issues you care about or that concern you. Search with keywords to learn more about the current bills up for discussion at the legislature this session that you are interested in.

### 3. [Track a bill.](#)

Use the Bill Tracking function to see how a specific bill you're interested in is progressing in the Connecticut General Assembly. Create a free bill tracking account through the CGA website to receive updates on bills you're interested in. Follow the path of a bill throughout the legislative session to learn firsthand how a bill becomes a law! Use the "track a bill" function to look up bills in prior legislative sessions as well. For example: search "S.B. 1" from the year 2019 and check out the path to passage of a major piece of legislation, paid family leave!

### 4. [Explore committees.](#)

Find a committee that interests you. The General Assembly has 26 joint committees. Each joint committee's membership includes members of both the House and Senate. Before most bills are up for a vote on the House or Senate floor, they must first be raised and passed by a Committee.

*Committees of the CGA: Aging; Appropriations; Banking; Children; Commerce; Education; Energy and Technology; Environment; Executive and Legislative Nominations; Finance, Revenue and Bonding; General Law; Government Administration and Elections; Higher Education and Employment; Internship; Housing; Human Services; Insurance and Real Estate; Judiciary; Labor and Public Employees; Joint Committee on Legislative Management; Planning and Development; Public Health; Public Safety and Security; Regulation Review; Transportation; and Veterans' Affairs*

### 5. [Search the bulletin.](#)

Consider the bulletin your daily guide to the legislature! The bulletin is updated daily and includes information on weekly legislative events, public hearings, and committee meetings. The bulletin also includes critical information about public hearings, including how to submit written testimony and where to sign up to testify. As the legislature operates virtually, the bulletin will also include links to "tune in" to legislative events throughout the year.



## HOW TO: SHARE YOUR STORY

By sharing your story and raising YOUR voice, you build the case for women’s economic security or other issues you care about here in Connecticut.

### Why is it important to share your story?

By sharing YOUR story, you put a face to the issues regarding women’s economic security and give it a voice. When you share your story, whether with a legislator, or your own network, it allows listeners or readers to understand the difficult reality Connecticut women lacking economic security face.

*When you share your story, with a legislator or anyone else, remember:*

- Your story is your own and cannot be wrong. It is YOUR personal experience. Your experience is so important to the lawmaking process and it has value and meaning.
- If you’re sharing your story with a lawmaker about a specific issue, you don’t need to know all the answers! Just have a clear “ask” in mind (ex: please support paid leave, pay equity, etc.) and be prepared to state how this issue has impacted you.

### Tips for *building* your story:

1. Think of a **memorable** event
2. Write your story in **chronological order** - helps you remember!
3. Include **different** elements
4. Edit & revise
5. Share with people you are **comfortable** with to start

### Tips for *sharing* your story:

1. **Do paint a realistic picture.** If you’ve personally experienced a specific policy issue personally, like financial instability, pay discrimination or sexual harassment in the workplace -- and are willing to share -- explain to your legislator how that adversity has affected you, and how its resolution has or would benefit you and your family.
2. **Don’t be afraid to be genuine.** It is okay to get emotional while sharing your story, both in person and in your writing. Don’t be afraid to show your fear, rage, pain, and anything other emotions you’ve felt while experiencing economic hardship or harassment in the workplace.
3. **Keep it brief and stick to the highlights.** Storytelling is similar to a movie trailer—just give your audience the parts that grab their attention and leave them wanting to know more. When they ask questions, you’ve caught their attention.



## HOW TO: CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR

Anyone can be an advocate, and sometimes it's as easy as picking up the phone. Call your State Representative and/or State Senator to tell them why supporting women's economic security or another issue is important to you.

***Unsure of who represents you?*** Check out the CT General Assembly's website, [www.cga.ct.gov](http://www.cga.ct.gov). Scroll to the middle of the page to the "Find Your Legislator" box. Insert your town, street name and number and click Find to bring you to your district's elected officials! Click on your Representative or Senator's NAME to bring you to their website, and click on their TITLE to bring you to an automatic email message sent to their address.

You can also speak with legislators face to face at town hall meetings, likely virtually. Visit their official website (through [cga.ct.gov](http://cga.ct.gov) or by searching their name) or their Facebook page to view their upcoming events. Subscribe to their email list if possible to stay informed on upcoming events and what they're working on at the legislature.

### **A few tips for calling your elected official:**

1. Identify yourself by name and the town you're calling from.
2. Explain your reason for calling. Follow talking points from CWEALF or another advocacy organization or briefly share your own story. Make sure to ask your legislator (or the legislative aide who will likely answer the phone) his/her position on the issue you're calling about.
3. Request a written response to your phone call or a phone call back if you did not speak to your legislative member. If the legislator requires further information, be sure to provide follow up information as soon as possible after your conversation.
4. Thank the person who took the phone call for their time and consideration.

### **Sample Script:**

"Hello Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_, my name is [YOUR NAME] and I strongly support [INSERT ISSUE AND REASON FOR YOUR SUPPORT - IF YOU HAVE A PERSONAL STORY, BRIEFLY STATE IT HERE - see previous page for tips!] I hope you will support [INSERT ISSUE] this legislative session. Thank you."



## HOW TO:

# SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH YOUR STATE LEGISLATOR

Meeting with your State Representative and/or State Senator can be an intimidating experience; however, it is critical for them to hear about issues that are affecting their constituents and their communities. Taking time to prepare for the meeting will alleviate some of the stress and will help you get the most out of your meeting.

### Before the Meeting:

1. **Call or email your legislator's office and set up a meeting.** Follow the directions on the previous page to find your legislator online. To schedule a meeting with your State Senator, click on the "Email & Contact" tab on their website and call the legislative aide listed, who will schedule the meeting. To schedule a meeting with your State Representative, call the number listed on their home page in the right hand corner and ask to speak with the legislative aide to Representative \_\_\_\_.
2. **Schedule the meeting in advance.** Legislators usually have a lot of things going on at once, particularly during the legislative session. It is optimal to schedule your meeting 2-4 weeks in advance.
3. **Invite a few friends.** Bringing 2 or 3 constituents along with you to the meeting helps to show strength in numbers. Just make sure to let the legislative aide know ahead of time how many people you plan to bring!
4. **Do your research.** Prior to the meeting, it is incredibly important that you research your legislators to see what position they take on certain issues, and what committees they are on. Doing this will give you a better sense of who they are as a person.

### During the Meeting:

1. **Encourage a specific action during the meeting.** For example, if you would like the legislator to vote for or against a specific measure, co-sponsor a bill, or generate support for an issue amongst other legislators, be clear and specific about your intention.
2. **Use factual examples and concrete examples to support your points.** You can do this by sharing a personal story on an issue that can resonate with your legislator or by bringing a brief handout to give to them before leaving the meeting. Feel free to contact CWEALF or another advocacy organization for information to bring with you.
3. **Thank them for meeting with you.** It is important to end the meeting by thanking the legislator for taking time out of their day to listen to your concerns.

### After the Meeting:

**Follow up!** Remember to follow up with an email or letter reiterating the points that were made in the meeting. This is also the time to answer any questions you didn't know the answer to during the meeting or to send any other information that was requested of you.



## HOW TO: TESTIFY AT A PUBLIC HEARING

### What is a Public Hearing?

Public hearings present valuable opportunities to make YOUR voice heard before a bill becomes a law. Visit [www.cga.ct.gov](http://www.cga.ct.gov) to track legislation and find out when a bill of interest to you will be up for a public hearing. The CGA also provides a great guide to making your voice heard in the public hearing process here: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/Content/YourVoice.asp>.

Remember to check the daily bulletin for up to date information on public hearings, including how to sign up to testify or where to submit written testimony. The CGA must provide the public at least 5 days notice prior to a public hearing.

### How to Testify at a Public Hearing:

#### Tips for to Testifying Virtually:

- Check out the Bulletin on [cga.ct.gov](http://cga.ct.gov) for information on a public hearing that interests you and follow the link provided in the description to sign up virtually.
- Look for an email with the link to participate after signing up and more information. Speaking order for all public hearings is determined via a lottery process. Make sure to check the Committee's page on [cga.ct.gov](http://cga.ct.gov) at the time provided in the Bulletin's description of the public hearing for the order of speakers to know where you are in line!
- Once the hearing begins, use the Zoom link provided to you by the Committee to wait for your turn to testify. You'll be placed in a waiting room until your name is called.
- If you are using computer audio, make sure you have a microphone if you need to talk. If not, use the call-in feature.
- If you have audio problems, switch to the dial in option
- If using cellular, please stay in one place where you have a good signal

#### How to Submit Written Testimony:

- Can't make it to testify in person? Check the bulletin for information on where and when to email public hearing testimony before the hearing.
- Make sure to clearly state which bills you are testifying on.
- If you are submitting testimony on more than one bill, it's okay to combine the testimony into one document. Just be sure to clarify which section applies to which bill!
- Follow CWEALF or other advocacy organizations for sample testimony templates, additional guidance, and talking points

#### What to Expect at the Public Hearing:

- The first hour of the hearing is typically reserved for state officials, including members of the legislature, Constitutional Officers, etc.
- After that, each speaker is limited to 3 minutes of testimony. Speaking from your own experience is most persuasive.
- When you are called to testify, you'll sit at a desk equipped with a microphone. When introducing yourself, make sure to include your town, the number and title of the bill you are addressing, whether you support or oppose the bill.

- After your three minutes, committee members may ask you questions. Answer briefly and accurately. If you don't know an answer, no problem! Just let them know you'll follow up after the hearing with the information they're looking for.

## Sample description and instructions for a virtual public hearing (via the CGA's Bulletin):

### COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2021

The Committee on Children will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, February 18, 2021 at 1:00 P.M.** via **Zoom**.<sup>1</sup> The public hearing can be viewed via [YouTube Live](#). In addition, the public hearing may be recorded and broadcast live on [CT-N.com](#).<sup>2</sup> Individuals who wish to testify via Zoom must register using the [On-line Testimony Registration Form](#).<sup>3</sup> The registration form must contain the name of the person who will be testifying. A unique email address must be provided for each person registered to speak. Registration will close on February 17, 2021 at 3:00 P.M.<sup>4</sup> Speaker order of approved registrants will be listed in a randomized order and posted on the Committee for Children website on February 17, 2021 at 7:00 P.M. under Public Hearing Testimony.<sup>5</sup> If you do not have internet access, you may provide testimony via telephone. To register to testify by phone, call the Phone Registrant Line at (860) 240-0370 to leave your contact information.<sup>6</sup> Please email written testimony to [KIDTestimony@cga.ct.gov](mailto:KIDTestimony@cga.ct.gov) in PDF format.<sup>7</sup> Testimony should clearly state testifier name and bill they are testifying on. The Committee requests that testimony be limited to matters related to the items on the Agenda. The first hour of the hearing is reserved for Elected Officials. Speakers will be limited to three minutes of testimony.<sup>8</sup> The Committee encourages witnesses to submit a written statement and to condense oral testimony to a summary of that statement. All public hearing testimony, written and spoken, is public information. As such, it will be made available on the CGA website and index by internet search engines.

#### Key:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Date and time of the hearing</li> <li>2. How to stream a hearing - link to YouTube channel and CT-N.com</li> <li>3. Link to online registration form to sign up to give verbal testimony</li> <li>4. Date and time when registration to testify verbally CLOSES</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Directions on where to find the speaking order for the public hearing, determined by a lottery process</li> <li>6. Directions on how to register to testify via phone</li> <li>7. Committee email address to submit written testimony</li> <li>8. Reminder: speakers are limited to three minutes of testimony each!</li> </ol> |
|--|---|

## If public hearings are in person\*:

### Directions & Parking:

- The Legislative Office Building is located at 300 Capitol Ave., Hartford.
- Visitor parking is available on the first floor and basement of the Legislative Office Garage. The entrance to the basement is the first right (just around the corner) after the entrance to the first floor of the garage.
- On-street metered parking is also available nearby on any of the side streets that run perpendicular to Capitol Ave. Additional garage parking is available at 21 Oak St.

### How to Testify in Person:

- Each Legislative Committee has a different process for signing up to testify in person. To learn what that process is, check out [www.cga.ct.gov](http://www.cga.ct.gov) and click on the daily Bulletin, which gives clear directions prior to each public hearing on where to sign up, what time, and how many copies of written testimony to bring with you.
- Testimony should clearly state your name and what bill/bills you're testifying on.
- Unless specified by the committee, speakers are usually taken in a "first come- first serve" order – so plan to arrive early to sign up!

## General Tips for Testifying:

1. **Make your testimony stand out!** The best way to do so is to share YOUR story and why proposed legislation is important to you.
2. **Practice and stay focused.** There will likely be lots of distractions while you're speaking, including people moving around in the audience or even legislators walking in and out of the room. Practicing your testimony ahead of time will ensure you'll stay within the 3 minute timeframe and that you'll deliver strong, clear testimony.
3. **Follow up.** After submitting testimony or testifying in person, make sure to send your testimony to your own State Representative and State Senator so that they know one of their constituents cares about this specific issue. If you are attending or submitting testimony as part of a group, make sure others you're with do so too.
4. **A few guidelines for delivering testimony:**
  - Identify yourself and the organization you represent (if any)
  - State your position clearly for or against the proposed bill(s)
  - Identify the bill by name and number
  - Add your explanation - why is this issue important to you?
  - Summarize your position at the end of your testimony
  - Thank the committee for the opportunity to speak

*\*In person public hearings are unlikely during the 2021 legislative session.*



## HOW TO: ENGAGE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a great way to engage more people, including your own network of friends, families, and colleagues, regarding issues you care about. Ways to engage in policy & advocacy on social media:

### 1. Share your story.

Introduce issues about women's economic security by sharing your experience with the topic, why you are concerned or support the bill. Sharing your own story will make followers more likely to read the information in full. Consider utilizing the different functions of social media such as polls and comment sections to encourage followers to share their own experiences.

### 2. Create engaging graphics.

Use color and interesting images to grab the attention of your followers. Utilize websites like Canva to stay organized and keep your graphics fresh and exciting. Diversify your content with videos and audio. Limit the use of words in your graphics and keep it to 1-2 key lines. Provide more detailed information in the caption.

### 3. Give action steps.

Clearly introduce the topic and educate your followers about the importance of women's economic security. Always provide an easy way for followers to engage with the subject; links to online petitions, accounts to follow, websites to contact legislators, and links for events to attend.

### 4. Engage with other activists.

Follow accounts of activists and organizations that support women's economic security and other steps for equality. Boost others' content by liking, retweeting or sharing posts.

### 5. Use CWEALF resources.

Share posts created by @CWEALF and link to our CWEALF's 2021 Legislative Agenda or other helpful materials. Check out [CWEALF's policy page](#) for additional information and resources. Encourage followers to sign up for the CWEALF mailing list to stay informed.



## HOW TO:

# WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR TO YOUR LOCAL NEWS OUTLET

Writing a letter to the editor (LTE) of local and regional newspapers is one effective way to reach a large public audience and elected officials about the importance of policies that promote women's economic security. Local news outlets always want to hear from their local readers.

### A few tips for writing an effective letter to the editor (LTE):

1. **Pay close attention to word count requirements.** These requirements are usually found in print and online on the same page the letters are published. If you can't find this information, call the newspaper and ask! LTEs are short: as few as 250 words are usually the maximum. Try to keep your sentences short, too.
2. **Open strong with a good hook and with the most important information at the top.** The first paragraph should include the "who, what, where and when." You can explain "why" in the rest of the letter. Tip -- Editors keep an eye out for: subject matter that is generating a lot of attention or controversy; something that is timely like a bill coming up for a hearing or was voted on; a fresh or new take on an issue.
3. **Reference a recent story and include the link in your letter.** Editors are usually more responsive to letters that reference a previous article in its own publication. Be on the lookout for articles about paid leave in your local news outlet. Timing is important. Try to respond within a 3-4 day window of the article's publication.
4. **Share your story.** This is where you explain "why." In 2-3 sentences, briefly state why women's economic security is important to you personally. Why are you submitting this letter?
5. **Always include a strong call to action** at the end of your letter. For example, "I urge legislators to pass paid family and medical leave legislation this session."
6. **Email your letter.** An email address for the letter to the editor section of the newspaper will likely be found on its editorial page, either in print or online. In your signature line, make sure to include your name, telephone number, email address and mailing address so the newspaper can verify that you wrote the letter. Only your name and city will be published.
7. Don't be afraid to **call the editor** to flag your submission to their attention. Let she/he know that you are alerting them to the submission in response to a recent story they wrote (if applicable). Editors tend to receive plenty of submissions every week. Most editors will appreciate the head's up.

### Sample Letter:

#### [Letter to the Editor: Pass Paid Family Leave](#) (New Haven Register, 2/26/19)

I am a working mom with a toddler — and I support paid family and medical leave. My commute, one-way, is three hours to my job in New York City, where they have passed paid family leave and increased the minimum wage. I am not the only one on Metro North each week.

In fact, I've learned more about Connecticut residents, many of whom are women of varying age ranges, undergoing a similarly challenging commute to states like New York or Massachusetts where paid family and medical leave have been passed. This is the first step toward building and retaining a stronger workforce in Connecticut. It would allow families to pay their bills and educate their children. It would also mean being able to keep our families safer and healthier. People move to this state to have a better quality of life for their children. A stronger family means a stronger workforce.

I have experienced paid family and medical leave in New York. I want to live and bring up my daughter in a state that understands the importance of taking care of its workers in order to grow and sustain its economy for generations to come.

I urge legislators to pass paid family and medical leave legislation this session.

Mary Caparas, Madison CT



## ADDITIONAL POLICY PRIORITIES & PARTNERS:

**Access to Child Care:** CWEALF supports policies that increase access to affordable and quality child care in our state, and that improve the economic security of child care workers. For more information, please see the [Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance](#).

**The CROWN Act:** CWEALF stands with the YWCA Hartford Region in calling on Connecticut to join the current states that have passed the CROWN Act to ensure that workers, specifically Black women, are not discriminated against because of their hairstyle. Learn more from the [YWCA Hartford Region](#) and [click here to take action in support of the CROWN Act](#).

**Domestic and Sexual Violence:** Domestic and sexual violence impact women's economic security. CWEALF is proud to continue to partner with the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) and the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence to advocate for increased protections for victims and survivors. Learn more from the [CCADV](#) and the [Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence](#).

**Housing:** CWEALF supports actions to provide financial relief to renters during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as legislation to increase access to affordable housing and combat restrictive zoning laws that continue to segregate Connecticut. Learn more via [Desegregate CT](#) and [Connecticut Fair Housing Center](#).

**Immigrant Rights:** Undocumented immigrants continue to be left behind in critical policy decisions, especially in response to COVID-19. The Connecticut General Assembly needs to expand access to HUSKY insurance to include all undocumented immigrants and provide a COVID-19 relief fund specifically for undocumented immigrants and their families. Learn more from [CT Students for a Dream](#).

**LGBTQIA+ Rights:** All people, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, should be protected under the law and free from discrimination or harassment. CWEALF supports legislation to advance and protect the rights of our state's LGBTQIA+ community. Learn more from [CT Equality](#).

**Police Accountability:** Police brutality against the Black community is a feminist issue; we cannot fight for gender equity without dismantling white supremacy, and we will not achieve gender justice without racial justice. CWEALF supports our community partners leading on this issue, including [ACLU of Connecticut](#).

**Reproductive Rights & Healthcare:** CWEALF is a proud member of the Coalition for Choice, a group led by Planned Parenthood of Southern New England (PPSNE) that advocates for access to comprehensive healthcare and reproductive choice. Connect with [Planned Parenthood Votes! Connecticut](#) and [NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut](#).

**Resources, Talking Points & Fact Sheets:**

- [CWEALF's 2021 Legislative Agenda](#)
- [2020 Candidate's Guide to Women's Economic Security](#)
- [2020 Voter's Guide to Women's Economic Security](#)
- Know Your Rights in the Workplace: COVID-19 in [English](#) & [Spanish](#)
- [Women & COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#)

**Resources on the legislative process in Connecticut:**

- [Connecticut Legislative History](#)
- [How a Bill Becomes a Law in Connecticut](#)
- [Navigating the Legislative Process](#) (CT Health Policy Project)

**Follow us on social media!**

- **Facebook:** [facebook.com/CWEALF](https://www.facebook.com/CWEALF)
- **Instagram:** [@cwealf](https://www.instagram.com/cwealf)
- **Twitter:** [@PaidLeaveforCT](https://twitter.com/PaidLeaveforCT)

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<https://bit.ly/CWEALFAction>

**Contact CWEALF:**

- For general information, contact [cwealf@cwealf.org](mailto:cwealf@cwealf.org)
- For legal assistance, contact CWEALF's free Legal Education Information & Referral line: 860-524-0601 or contact us through [email here](#). ¡Se habla español!