

CWEALF'S 2022 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

OUR MISSION: CWEALF is a statewide, nonprofit organization that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. Our work supports women and girls who identify as cisgender and transgender, and non-binary individuals, as well as people of all marginalized gender identities systemically and historically oppressed by those in power.

THE CHALLENGES - WHAT WE HEARD FROM WOMEN IN CONNECTICUT

Data shows that women, specifically women of color, continue to experience the most severe financial, social and emotional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Behind every data point is a story about real people: this year, CWEALF hosted four Women's Wisdom Circles in English and Spanish to hear directly from women most impacted by this crisis. From those conversations, we learned that women, especially women living with poverty and women of color, are in survival mode trying to provide basic needs for themselves and their families.

These women have a front row view on the problems facing their communities and they know what solutions will work to ensure their economic security, health, and safety. They know systemic level change is possible if we all fight for it together. They want to be part of the political process but face barriers due to lack of governmental transparency and confusion about how or where to find information about the legislative process, work scheduling and transportation challenges, childcare concerns, and the discrimination they must confront due to race, gender, class, and citizenship status.



These Women's Wisdom Circles are a starting point for CWEALF as we continue to hold ourselves accountable to working with the community in centering and trusting the wisdom and recommendations of the most marginalized women in our policy work.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

In 2019, Connecticut passed one of the strongest paid family and medical leave programs in the nation and raised the minimum wage. But we cannot become complacent: now is the time to keep building and fighting for everything that our people need to thrive.

This year, despite the narrative that Connecticut is facing a declining economy, the truth is that because of an influx of federal funds we have a projected budget surplus and a growing rainy day



fund worth billions of dollars. We are not lacking resources but we need bold political willpower to enact policy change.

We must allocate resources equitably to support our most disadvantaged, underserved communities across the state and to build an economy that does not exploit women, families, people of color and workers. Allocation of our state's resources must center the needs and demands of disempowered and disenfranchised communities over privileged communities, must center people over corporate profits, and must work toward repairing the intergenerational harm rooted in bad policy decisions that have created racist or sexist consequences, whether those consequences were intended or unintentional.

We are committed to advocating for policy change that is explicitly anti-racist and anti-sexist, with a justice and reparations lens. As we continue to strive for our shared goals of equity, freedom, and justice for all Connecticut residents, we must be deliberate and persistent in recognizing and incorporating the needs, wisdom and lived experiences of women, specifically women of color, into all of our policy efforts and decisions.

POLICY PRIORITIES

1) SUPPORT WOMEN, WORKERS AND FAMILIES

- **Improve Access to Paid Sick Days:** The COVID-19 crisis proved that our people need legislation that strengthens current law and ensures [access to paid sick days](#) for all workers, regardless of their job title or size of their employer. We also urge legislators to act swiftly to adopt an emergency COVID-19 paid sick leave policy and protect workers who need time off from work if they are diagnosed with or exposed to the virus.
- **Enact a Fair Work Week:** Hourly workers too often have no voice in their schedules and work unpredictable hours that prevent them from securing child care, receiving medical care or attending school. CWEALF supports the Fair Work Week Coalition and legislation to provide a fair and stable work week to hourly workers, who are disproportionately women and people of color.
- **Build a System of Affordable Universal Child Care:** Our communities need legislation that makes child care universally available for every family, regardless of a child's age or household income, and increases the wages of child care providers.

2) BUILD A MORE EQUITABLE ECONOMY

- **Create a Recovery for All:** We support the [Recovery For All](#) coalition's efforts to create greater transparency and build equity into our state's current tax structure. We must ensure that federal dollars allocated to our state and municipal governments are dedicated to erasing inequities in pre-K through grade 12 public education, creating good jobs by investing in infrastructure, expanding affordable housing, ensuring robust funding for public higher education and job training programs, and expanding access to affordable healthcare.

- **Close the Gender Wage & Wealth Gap:** Lost wages due to the gender wage gap have long-lasting impacts on women’s housing, childcare, education, retirement and health care decisions, especially for women of color. At the same time, women also pay more for some goods and services than men. A systemic level solution to this problem is legislation that addresses gendered pricing, as well as initiatives to continue our state’s stance as a leader in pay equity and transparency.

3) ENSURE BASIC NEEDS ARE MET FOR ALL

- **Strengthen Access to Health Care & Reproductive Rights:** Advancing health and reproductive equity and justice requires supporting legislation that ensures all Connecticut residents have access to quality and affordable health care - including abortion - regardless of gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, immigration status, race, ethnicity, income, or disability. This also includes access to responsive and comprehensive mental health care that is affordable and culturally appropriate.



- **Provide Equitable Access to Menstrual Products:** Access to menstrual products should not be a privilege or luxury. Our policies should reflect that menstrual products and supplies are basic necessities and should be free and readily available in public spaces, including but not limited to, K-12 schools, colleges and universities, correctional facilities, and shelters.
- **Safeguard Access to Justice & Safety:** Eradicating violence against women and other marginalized people, including trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming people, requires passage of legislation that strengthens protections for victims of domestic and sexual violence and also ensures their rights are represented in laws related to custody, child support, and divorce. Our policies should ensure housing as a right in Connecticut and provide more inclusive housing opportunities that are equitable, accessible, affordable and safe for all, especially for families in the communities where they want to live.



HOW TO ADVOCATE WITH US

- Check out CWEALF’s Community Action Toolkit to learn how to take action by testifying at a public hearing, contacting your legislator, and more.
- Sign up for CWEALF’s e-news to stay connected
- Follow CWEALF on Facebook and Instagram
- Become a monthly donor to support our work