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Legislative Women's Caucus Hail's Priority Bills for a Stronger California

Implore Governor to Keep Promises to Women and Families

(Sacramento)— Unifying their voices in support of women and families, the California Legislative Women's Caucus (LWC) today hailed its legislative priorities under four pillars aimed at protecting and advancing the rights and opportunities for women and working families. The LWC also called on the Governor to keep his promise from last year to families by increasing childcare provider rates and childcare slots for the unmet needs of 85% of working Californians.

The announcements came on Equal Pay Day, highlighting the pay disparities of women in the workforce who, in California, aren't expected to earn parity until 2043 earning \$.78 to a white man's dollar. The Commission on the Status of Women and Girls Equal Pay Taskforce also issued a report underscoring the gaps in pay equity in California. Gaps in pay are considerably higher for women of color with Latina's earning \$.43 and African American women \$.63 on the dollar compared to their white male counterparts.

"If we want working families to continue working, we've got to provide the childcare slots needed so parents can work and kids can learn," said Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia, chair of the Legislative Women's Caucus. "Moreover, if women are doing the same work (as their male counterparts), they sure as well better be earning the same pay."

The Legislative Women's Caucus again continued its promise to child care in the budget that has been championed by the caucus for more than a decade. A decade that has made drastic, long-lasting cuts to a system that has been chronically underfunded and underappreciated.

The Caucus also vocalized their intent to continue to lead the nation in protecting access to women's healthcare and reproductive services now threatened by the Trump Administration.

"Any challenge to the principles outlined in Roe v. Wade is an immediate call to action," said Garcia, citing the Women's Rally last month that attracted hundreds to the steps of the Capitol. "Access to health services by providers like Planned Parenthood have given us decades of evidence that prove access to all healthcare services – as I myself depended upon– is how to keep women healthy."

This year, the LWC's legislative priorities focus on seven bills within its four pillars:

1.) Fair Pay and Job Opportunity (AB 168 Eggman) 2.) Access to Childcare (AB273 Aguiar-Curry) 3.) Family Friendly Workplaces (SB63 Jackson) and 4.) Protecting Vulnerable Communities (SB 500 Leyva, AB480 & AB 1312 Gonzalez-Fletcher, and AB 1386 Waldron).

"We will continue to advocate for women and working families by supporting policies that maximize equality and opportunity," said Senator Connie M. Leyva (D-Chino), Vice Chair of the Legislative Women's Caucus. "We are committed to the promises we've made to our constituents and will continue to work with the Governor and our colleagues to ensure that women and working families are empowered to achieve success for themselves and their loved ones."

California still lags behind the needs identified more than a decade ago. Currently, it is estimated that six out of seven children eligible for subsidized child care in California did not receive services from state programs, and the estimated number of children eligible for subsidized childcare is 1,479,000. The state of California served 218,000 of children in subsidized child care last year.

Last year, in conjunction with both houses of the legislature and the Governor, the Caucus adopted a long-term strategy with incremental growth to address the ongoing need of working California's.

"In order for these parents to provide for their families, they must have adequate access to child care and early education," added Garcia. "When parents cannot find or afford child care, the economy loses valued workers and children miss opportunities to learn. The achievement gap begins, and then ends, with an unqualified workforce because we've neglected them all along. This equation is compounded further when you add, or subtract, the fact that women still earn 20-40% less than men."

The Caucus urged the Governor to factor these costs and benefits into his May Budget Revision that should seek to provide eligible parents access to reliable care for their children, while maintaining promises made last year to providers who care for working families in California.

What others are saying:

On AB 168:

Women are already paid less than men, for the same work and because professions where women predominate are undervalued. Using salary history to determine compensation is double-baking inequality into the system," said Assemblymember Eggman, D-Stockton. "This bill gives women the power to determine for themselves where they start negotiating."

On SB 500:

"I am proud to author SB 500 since it will ensure that local authorities and prosecutors are able to pursue and prosecute individuals that threaten victims with the distribution of sexually explicit pictures. Sextortion is always wrong and we must make sure that this crime is prosecuted fully and uniformly across California. I thank the Legislative Women's Caucus for prioritizing SB 500 and

making sure that we always stand with victims of sexual extortion." -- Senator Connie M. Leyva (D-Chino)

On AB 1386:

"Genetic testing, screening and awareness for breast and ovarian cancer is not a luxury; it is a basic health service that should be available those who can benefit from this test. Assembly Bill 1386 is one more step towards the goal of equal health access for all women," said Assemblywoman Marie Waldron. "But especially those in the underserved communities that often go without needed medical care."

On AB 480:

"Diapers aren't optional for babies, and they aren't free at daycare centers. Parents on CalWORKs should be able to claim reimbursement because a lack of diapers is a barrier to work," Assemblywoman Gonzalez Fletcher said. "We should be removing barriers to self-sufficiency and that means making diapers more affordable for CalWORKs parents."

On AB 1312:

"California needs to do a better job of helping sexual assault victims navigate all of the legal, medical and personal issues that survivors have to deal with. It should start with a Sexual Assault Victims Bill of Rights that ensures each survivor is informed about their rights and the resources that are available to them after such a horrific episode in their lives," Assemblywoman Gonzalez Fletcher said. "Victims have rights, and AB 1312 would strengthen those rights to include emergency contraception for women and a ban on police departments prematurely destroying rape test kits."

On SB 63:

"Any new parent knows that the birth of a new baby comes with a host of changes and challenges. But losing a job should never be among those challenges," said Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson. "Ensuring that we have strong parental leave policies in place is an economic issue that affects the health and well-being of millions of California's children and working families, and we have to do better."

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