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Legislative Women’s Caucus Announces Priority Legislation

SACRAMENTO – California Legislative Women’s Caucus Chair Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia (D-Bell Gardens), Vice Chair Senator Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley), and other caucus members today announced a robust package of legislation aimed at further protecting and advancing the rights and opportunities for women and working families, leading with an equity lens.

“With the release of our priorities today, the Women’s Caucus continues to demonstrate our commitment to women, children, and families in California. Over the last two years, our Caucus has been working tirelessly to help reverse the devastating impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has had on women, especially women of color. The reality is that these issues existed long before the pandemic, but the pandemic further exacerbated and highlighted the work we need to do to lift up all women, especially low-income women of color, and given us a greater sense of urgency.” said Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia (D-Bell Gardens), chair of the California Legislative Women’s Caucus. “I am particularly excited to see a diverse package of bills that are leading with a lens on equity and excited to put the full weight of the caucus behind each and every one of these bills.”

“As vice chair of the Women’s Caucus, I am proud to stand behind this comprehensive legislative package focused on addressing the many inequities California women still face, many of which were amplified by the pandemic. I look forward to advancing these bills to help women return to work, stop gender inequities in pay and health care delivery, and improve women’s safety and economic opportunities,” said Senator Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley).

Six pillars reinforce the Legislative Women’s Caucus’ priority legislation for 2022: Gender equity, workplace equity, access to child care/family-friendly policies, health & safety, protecting vulnerable communities, and addressing poverty.

Gender Equity

- *AB 1467 (Cervantes)*

“It is abundantly clear that our universities need to reform their policies regarding sexual assault, and AB 1467 will help accomplish that by establishing the independence of sexual assault counselors on our college campuses. Ensuring that these counselors are independent of both the university and campus Title IX office will allow them to maintain confidentiality and trust with survivors,” said Assemblywoman Sabrina Cervantes (D-Corona). “I want to thank my colleagues in the Legislative Women’s Caucus for making my bill to support survivors of sexual assault, especially student survivors on our college campuses, a priority for our Caucus.”

- ***AB 1287 (Bauer-Kahan)***

“When women are paid less and charged more, it chips away at the financial security they’ve fought for. AB 1287 eliminates the “pink tax” of gender inequalities in the pricing women pay for goods and moves towards economic justice in California,” said Assemblywoman Rebecca Bauer-Kahan (D-Orinda).

Workplace Equity

- ***SB 1162 (Limón)***

“Pay transparency is key to achieving pay equity, which has been a key pillar and priority for the Women’s Caucus. SB 1162 will help identify the gender and race-based pay disparities by requiring pay transparency at every stage of the employment process, from hiring, to promotion, and ongoing employment. We must increase pay transparency in order to close the gender and racial wage gap, which prevents women, particularly women of color, from achieving economic security,” said Senator Monique Limón (D-Santa Barbara).

- ***SB 1325 (Gonzalez) - California Techquity Innovation Fund***

“California is one of the nation’s most diverse states, and a world leader in technology entrepreneurship,” said Senator Lena Gonzalez (D-Long Beach). “However, there are serious gaps in access to funding and support for minority-led, LGBTQ-led, and women-led tech businesses, and that is why I was proud to introduce SB 1325 this year which will help provide more financial resources and growth opportunities for underrepresented tech companies.”

Access to Child Care/Family-Friendly Policies

- ***SB 976 (Leyva) – Universal Preschool***

“I thank the Legislative Women’s Caucus for prioritizing SB 976, an important bill that offers flexibility and options for working families with children who would benefit from transitional kindergarten, but are unable to access those services because of their own work or other day-to-day responsibilities. This measure will help parents access schooling and care options for their young children that allow for flexible hours, such as early drop-off, late pick-up, weekend care, or year-round care. SB 976 will also help to protect the stability

of jobs for teachers at community-based providers, which employ primarily women of color,” said Senator Connie M. Leyva (D-Chino).

Health & Safety

- ***AB 32 (Aguiar-Curry)***

“The last two years of the pandemic have laid bare gross inequities in access to health care, especially in smaller communities and communities of color. Telehealth, specifically telephonic care, has allowed health professionals to continue to care for, indeed increased access to care for their patients,” said Assemblywoman Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (D-Winters). “AB 32 will make those improvements to health care access permanent and help in the fight to erase disparities created by income, race and ethnicity, lack of mobility, a shortage of health professionals, or a lack of available technology.”

- ***AB 2024 (Friedman)***

“As a breast cancer survivor myself, and as someone who was sent immediately from a suspicious mammogram to a diagnostic MRI, I know the importance of an early and fast detection,” said Assemblywoman Laura Friedman (D-Glendale). “Believe me, cancer is scary enough without the stress of weighing overwhelming costs against a possibly life-saving diagnosis. We need to pass AB 2024 and make sure that costs are not a barrier to diagnosis.”

- ***AB 2185 (Weber)***

“I am pleased to author AB 2185, which would not only expand access to medical evidentiary examinations for survivors of domestic violence assault to all Californians but would also create a funding system to reimburse qualified healthcare professionals for administering these exams,” said Assemblywoman Akilah Weber, M.D. (D-San Diego). “The announcement of today’s Legislative Women’s Caucus priorities underscores our commitment to achieving equitable policies for all women.”

Protecting Vulnerable Communities

- ***AB 988 (Bauer-Kahan)***

“AB 988 re-imagines our mental health crisis response, by providing an alternative to dialing 911. Women, and especially women of color have borne the brunt of an escalating mental health epidemic. With a full-time law enforcement that is over 80% male and over 60% white, women of color and trans women face a system poorly equipped to protect them during a mental health crisis,” said Assemblywoman Rebecca Bauer-Kahan (D-Orinda). AB 988 will institute a care-first response to a mental health crisis with trained, culturally competent professionals to change our system and save lives.”

- ***SB 1017 (Eggman)***

“SB 1017 increases eviction protections for survivors of domestic violence – expanding equitable access to these crucial safety measures. This bill will be a powerful legislative tool to stop unjust evictions of survivors of domestic violence, reduce the feminization of homelessness, and keep survivors and their loved ones together in safe and stable housing as they heal from trauma,” said Senator Susan Eggman (D-Stockton).

Addressing Poverty

- ***AB 2052 (Quirk-Silva)***

"CalWORKs is one of the state's largest anti-poverty programs. Families that apply and qualify for ongoing assistance each month to help pay for housing, food, and other necessary expenses. California students may obtain a free public education through the age of 21. Students may be faced with a number of circumstances that keep them in school for an extended period including students with disabilities or have social and economic-related reasons including students who started high school at a later age or who move around and fall behind. These students include immigrant children whose prior education does not qualify in California, foster youth, and children of migrant families who must follow the crops," said Assemblywoman Sharon Quirk-Silva (D-Fullerton) The pandemic has not only resulted in lost learning, but many students have dropped out to work to help their families, or were not able to participate in virtual learning due to lack of resources including technology and internet, homelessness or housing insecurity, as well as stress and anxiety. It is vital that we provide all the tools available to students to not only succeed academically but to make sure the students have access to resources and benefits available to them."

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