



Stronger California Advocates Network 2025 Policy Agenda



About the Stronger California Agenda

California is home to millions of women and families who rely on common sense public policy to help them build assets, succeed in equitable and safe workplaces, access affordable and quality care for their children and other family members, and ensure access to reproductive health care. That is why advocates, legislators, and community members throughout the state stand together in support of the Stronger California Agenda for gender, racial, and economic justice.

The Stronger California Agenda has five pillars that frame the policy initiatives critical to the economic security of women and families in this state. It recognizes that women are critical to a strong and vibrant California economy and play a pivotal role in spurring economic growth in the state. California is home to 12% of the country's women, who comprise almost half the workforce in our state. In California, mothers are the sole, primary, or co-breadwinners in 59.5% of families, and these numbers are even higher for women of color. Women influence the economy as decision-makers for their families, as consumers, and as key participants in the workforce.

The Stronger California Agenda advances comprehensive policy reforms addressing the intersecting obstacles women and families face to leading economically secure lives. California has the fifth largest economy in the world, but one of the nation's highest poverty rates, disproportionately harming women and children. Harassment and discrimination in the workplace continue to impede women's ability to succeed. Child and elder care costs are prohibitively high, and insufficient affordable options limit opportunities for working family caregivers. Women are paid less than their male counterparts for the same work in virtually every job sector. They are also more likely to work in low-wage jobs and often lack family-friendly work policies necessary to make a living while also caring for their families.

As our country faces unprecedented attacks against civil and constitutional rights and direct attacks on women, immigrants, LGBTQ+ communities, and critical safety net protections, we must double down in our collective work for systemic policy reforms protecting the fundamental rights of all Californians and creating better working and living conditions for all. The 2025 Stronger California Agenda sets forth critical policy priorities to build on our progress, address the ongoing needs of our communities, and fight back against attacks that threaten our rights and wellbeing.

Thank you for standing with the Stronger California Advocates Network in supporting this Agenda. A list of partners in the Stronger California Advocates Network is on the back page. To learn more, please visit StrongerCA.org.

Onward,

Noreen Farrell

Executive Director of Equal Rights Advocates
Co-Chair of the Stronger California Advocates
Network

Jessica Ramey Stender

Policy Director & Deputy Legal Director of Equal
Rights Advocates
Co-Chair of the Stronger California Advocates
Network

The 2025 Stronger California Advocates Network Agenda

Ensuring Fair Pay, Job Opportunities & Workplace Justice

SB 642 (Limón): Pay Equity Enforcement Act

2025 marks the 10th anniversary of the passage of the California Fair Pay Act, a historic, bipartisan measure that addressed gaping loopholes in the state’s Equal Pay Act. SB 642 will further strengthen the Equal Pay Act and ensure workers can effectively enforce their rights under the law by: revising outdated gender binary language, clarifying what constitutes “wages,” extending the statute of limitations to be consistent with other wage and anti-discrimination statutes, allowing workers to recover lost wages for all discriminatory paychecks, and providing limits on how wide pay ranges may be in public job postings.

SB 578 (Smallwood-Cuevas) + Related Budget Request: California Workplace Outreach Program (CWOP)

The California Workplace Outreach Program is a partnership between the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) and dozens of community organizations who serve as trusted messengers to workers at risk of wage theft, unsafe workplaces, retaliation, and abuse. By educating workers on their rights and providing tools for direct resolution of workplace violations, CWOP has proven a critical part of California’s commitment to making good on its promises to workers. SB 578 would demonstrate the Legislature’s intent to make this effective program a permanent component of California’s labor-standards infrastructure, and expand its scope to cover employment rights and benefits administered by the EDD (including Paid Family Leave and Disability Leave) and the CA Civil Rights Department (anti-discrimination protections).

AB 250 (Aguar-Curry): Justice for Survivors of Sexual Assault Act

AB 250 protects sexual assault survivors by holding both perpetrators, and any entities that attempt to cover up an assault, accountable. Due to well-documented psychological, social, and institutional barriers, it often takes time for survivors to take action to hold responsible individuals or entities accountable. In addition to shame, fear of retaliation, and the emotional toll of reliving the trauma, survivors are often silenced by power imbalances, workplace dynamics, or intimidation from perpetrators who hold positions of authority. Where there is an attempt to conceal the assault, these barriers are even greater—survivors not only face the trauma of the assault itself, but also the deliberate suppression of their experience, in many cases by those who should have protected them. To address these challenges, AB 250 will provide a two-year window for filing any sexual assault claim, regardless of when the assault occurred, for damages suffered as the result of an attack where a cover-up or attempted cover up is involved. This bill recognizes the unique challenges survivors face -- exacerbated by efforts to conceal the wrongdoing -- and gives them an opportunity to seek justice, supporting their mental wellbeing and ability to fully engage in the workplace and other areas of their lives. It also serves the broader public interest and increases accountability by discouraging workplaces and other institutions from covering up sexual assault.

AB 1018 (Bauer-Kahan) Automated Decision Safety Act

AB 1018 will provide people with more information, important rights, and greater transparency into the use of Automated Decision Systems (ADS) for critical areas of their lives—while requiring developers and deployers to take more responsibility for reducing the likelihood of discrimination. When biased ADS are deployed, women and people of color are unfairly screened out of opportunities, preventing them from getting access to economic opportunities and sidelining their job prospects. AB 1018 aims to end discrimination through automated decision-making systems by requiring these tools to be tested before they are used on the public, requiring notice and explanation to people about if and how ADS is used to make decisions that impact them, and establishing critical rights that give people more control over how these tools are used in their daily lives.

AB 1351 (Ahrens): Youth Employment System (YES)

AB 1351 directs the California Department of Education (CDE) to maintain a Youth Employment System (YES) to house the work permit data of employed minors. The transition to a centralized digital system will result in improved data collection, reporting, and oversight to protect working minors. It will also ensure that all enforcement agencies have immediate access to relevant information, enabling them to identify high-risk workplaces and allocate limited inspection resources more effectively. Finally, a centralized digital system will provide crucial insights into the impact of labor participation on a child's academic success, socioeconomic outcomes, and career readiness. These insights will allow policymakers to make better-informed decisions, implement targeted interventions, and enhance the protection of minors in the workforce.

Increasing Access To Stable, Affordable, Quality Early Childhood Care And Education

AB 49 (Muratsuchi): The California Safe Haven Schools & Child Care Act

Assembly Bill 49 protects immigrant students and their families by prohibiting ICE officers from entering a school site or child care facility for any purpose without providing valid identification, a written statement of purpose, a valid judicial warrant, and approval from the school district's superintendent or director of the child care center. If approved, an ICE official's access would be restricted to school or child care facilities where students or children are not present.

Child Care & Early Care and Education Budget Request

To make affordable child care accessible to all California families, we must ensure that Early Care and Education (ECE) providers are being fairly compensated and that adequate ECE spaces are available. This budget request seeks to implement a cost-based rate system that reimburses ECE providers for the true cost of care of a child's authorized enrollment, based on the federal requirements, and allocate ongoing funding for the new rate system. The budget request also includes prioritizing the release of additional ECE spaces and ensuring that ECE programs receive dedicated funding and support to recover from the devastating Los Angeles wildfires.

Funding and support should be equitably distributed to ensure the most vulnerable communities can rebuild and thrive.

Promoting Family-Friendly Workplaces

SB 590 (Durazo): Paid Family Leave for Chosen Family

SB 590 would make California's Paid Family Leave program more equitable by allowing workers to receive Paid Family Leave benefits while caring for seriously ill members of their chosen or extended family. The current definition of family in the Paid Family Leave program disproportionately excludes LGBTQ+ and immigrant communities, as well as people with disabilities. The California Family Rights Act allows for *unpaid* leave to care for chosen or extended family, but without wage replacement, the most marginalized workers are not able to utilize this protection. Women, people of color, and single parents are the most likely to forgo leave they need because of a lack of pay. Seven states already include chosen family in their paid family and medical leave programs. California needs to honor all families, regardless of legal or biological relationship.

AB 65 (Aguilar-Curry): Pregnancy Leave for Educators

AB 65 would grant school employees up to 14 weeks of leave with full pay, paid for by the employer, when an employee is experiencing or has experienced pregnancy, miscarriage, childbirth, termination of pregnancy, or recovery from those conditions. As public employees, most California school employees are not eligible for paid pregnancy leave. When school employees get pregnant they must first exhaust their sick leave before accessing differential pay, the amount that is left over after their substitute has been paid. Since unused sick leave can be converted to retirement credits through the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS) when school employees retire, requiring educators to exhaust all their sick leave when dealing with a pregnancy related disability can have long lasting impacts, including reducing future retirement benefits by about \$100,000 over the course of an educator's retirement. AB 65 will help employees working in public schools and community colleges to take necessary leave from work for pregnancy, childbirth, and related conditions without sacrificing their financial security, the health of their families, or the health of their school communities.

Fighting Poverty & Promoting Asset-Building

AB 969 (Rodriguez): Reducing CalWORKS Barriers for Survivors

Gender-based violence is inextricably linked with economic insecurity and poverty. AB 969 will reduce barriers experienced by survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and stalking in applying for and accessing CalWORKs. Specifically, the bill will empower domestic violence survivors to successfully request CalWORKs accommodations via federally recognized program waivers. The bill also clarifies statewide standards and procedures for screening and assisting all survivors of gender-based violence in the CalWORKs program, and creates standardized informational materials and communication tools for use statewide.

AB 397 (M. Gonzalez): Expanding the California Child Tax Credit

No child should grow up in poverty – not in California, not anywhere. This bill proposes to reduce child poverty for an estimated 500,000 families who are excluded from the Young Child Tax Credit (YCTC). Most families who qualify for the CalEITC are excluded from the full \$2,000-per-child federal CTC, making access to California’s YCTC even more critical. Furthermore, 62% of CalEITC-eligible families are ineligible for the YCTC. By expanding the Young Child Tax Credit to all CalEITC-eligible families, state policymakers can ensure that all children, regardless of their age, have the support they need to thrive.

Reimagine CalWORKs Budget Request

The Fiscal Responsibility Act provides major opportunities to reimagine CalWORKs given the significant Caseload Reduction Credit that offer significant flexibility under the federal Work Participation Rate. Moreover, the Reimagine reforms strengthen families' ability to engage in higher education, work, and other opportunities to participate, which improve family outcomes and California’s WPR.

Budget request: Supporting victim services

Continued cuts to the federal Victims of Crime Act Fund (VOCA) are placing California crime victim service providers in a precarious situation - facing a projected 45% reduction in essential funding. This budget request will stabilize services, including counseling, rapid rehousing, legal services, crisis response, and other essential resources that support vulnerable individuals over both the short and long term. These programs in 2022 alone assisted over 816,000 survivors across the state, including survivors of sexual and domestic violence, child abuse, human trafficking, elder abuse, and so many others. VOCA funding is at the center of California’s response to supporting victims of crime, and we cannot afford to place restrictions and barriers on survivor’s ability to access support.

Budget Request: Restore \$10M for Free Tax Preparation Assistance, Education & Outreach for the CalEITC, and ITIN Application Assistance

Free tax preparation services, refundable tax credits like the CalEITC, and obtaining an individual taxpayer identification number (ITIN) are crucial resources that save families hundreds of dollars in fees, connect families to dozens of other benefits, and provide direct cash that helps individuals afford life’s basics. Programs like Free Tax Prep Assistance and Outreach & Education play an important role in connecting struggling communities with the financial resources they need to thrive. Currently, California dedicates \$10 million annually to these services; however, by dedicating a total of \$20 million annually, state lawmakers can provide Californians the support they need to file their taxes accurately, claim the credits they are entitled to, and access additional support like ITIN application assistance and enrollment in wraparound support services.

Protecting Health & Reproductive Rights

SB 497 (Wiener): Transgender State of Refuge

Protects sensitive patient health data for transgender and nonbinary Californians by requiring warrants for law enforcement to access the state's prescription drug database and establishes that knowingly sharing information from the database to unauthorized parties without a warrant is punishable as a misdemeanor. The bill also strengthens California's existing shield laws by prohibiting health care providers from complying with subpoenas requiring the disclosure of sensitive medical information about transgender and nonbinary patients. As anti-LGBTQ+ laws spread across the country, SB 497 ensures that medical records remain confidential and California healthcare providers cannot be used as tools for out-of-state investigations or legal action.

AB 82 (Ward): Health Data Privacy and Safety

Protects transgender and nonbinary Californians accessing essential healthcare and those seeking abortion and reproductive healthcare by limiting the sharing of sensitive patient health data. The bill also expands safety protections for patients, their families, and medical professionals who offer this care to protect them from harassment, violence, and hostile actors both in and outside of California. As the Trump administration seeks to prevent transgender and nonbinary people from accessing essential healthcare, and threats against medical professionals and their patients increase, AB 82 helps to ensure that all Californians can safely access the healthcare they need.

AB 260 (Aguiar-Curry): Protect Medication Abortion

Strengthens state laws to continue and expand access to medication abortion by clarifying state authority, protecting providers and facilities, affirming appropriate use and coverage of mifepristone, and making necessary clarifying changes to existing law - regardless of potential federal actions attempting to roll back evidence-based health care that has been proven to be safe and effective for 25 years.

AB 551 (Krell): Reproductive Health Emergency Preparedness Program

Establishes the Reproductive Health Emergency Preparedness Program (RHEPP) to expand and improve access to reproductive and sexual health care—including treatment for pregnancy loss, miscarriage, and abortion care—at emergency departments across California.

The Stronger California Advocates Network

The Network is a historic collaboration of organizations and advocate coalitions with deep experience working with communities affected by the five pillars of the Stronger California Agenda. The Network capitalizes on the strengths of our members to advance gender, racial, and economic justice.

Roundtable Members

9 to 5
ACLU of California
Act for Women and Girls
Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment
American Association of University Women
California Asset Building Coalition
California Child Care Resource & Referral Network
California Coalition for Worker Power
California Domestic Workers Coalition
California Employment Lawyers Association
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice
California Partnership
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
California Women's Law Center
California Work & Family Coalition
Caring Across Generations
Center for Popular Democracy
Child Care Law Center
Child Care Resource Center
Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice
Equal Rights Advocates
Equality California
First 5 California
Golden State Opportunity
Legal Aid at Work
Lutheran Office of Public Policy
Mujeres Unidas y Activas
National Council of Jewish Women
Organization United for Respect
Parent Voices California
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California
Raising California Together
Reproductive Freedom for All California
Restaurant Opportunities Centers (ROC) United
SEIU California
TechEquity Collaborative
Tradeswomen, Inc.
UFCW Western States Council
Voices for Progress

Western Center on Law and Poverty
Women's Foundation California
Work Equity
YWCA San Francisco & Marin

Network Supporters

Asset Building Strategies
Bet Tzedek
California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls
California Immigrant Policy Center
California Women Lawyers
Center for Responsible Lending
Centro Legal de la Raza
ChangeLab Solutions
Coalition of Labor Union Women – CA Capitol Chapter
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto
Consumer Attorneys of California
County of Santa Clara Office of Women's Policy
Courage California
Economic Security California Action
Equal Justice Society
Feminist Majority
FreeFrom
Friends Committee on Legislation of California
The Garment Worker Center
Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network
Insight Center for Community Economic Development
It's Time Network
Justice in Aging
National Housing Law Project
National Women's Political Caucus California
National Women's Political Caucus, LA Metro
Public Counsel
The Public Interest Law Project
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Women Lawyers of Sacramento
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