



## YWCA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

### 117<sup>TH</sup> Congress – Second Session

Informed by YWCA's rich 160-year history and by the expertise of our nationwide network, YWCA advocates for practical solutions that meet the needs of women, girls, and marginalized communities to advance our intersectional mission to eliminate racism and empower women. In this moment of prolonged health, economic, and social challenges for our nation, YWCA is driving an inclusive agenda to address the underlying gender equity and racial justice tensions that are so deeply embedded in our nation. YWCAs continue to call for action on the following health, economic, safety, and racial justice priorities:

- **Domestic and Sexual Violence:** Support survivors and prevent domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of gender-based violence particularly following increased reports during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- **Child Care:** Strengthen and retain skilled childcare and early learning providers to increase access to quality, affordable childcare for working families;
- **Appropriations:** Increase federal funding and support for housing, childcare, domestic violence, and other frontline human services experiencing ongoing, increased demand for services during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- **Racial Justice:** Advance equity, safety, and racial justice for women and girls of color across justice, education, health, and other systems with documented racial disparities;
- **Economic Security:** Ensure safe, fair, and equitable workplace opportunities and expand skilled workforce development opportunities for women, women of color, and historically marginalized communities;
- **Strengthening the Nonprofit Sector:** Increase the ability of nonprofits to respond and serve communities on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis.

YWCA is committed to working with Congress to pass legislation on these critical issues that disproportionately affect women and girls of color and have become of greater urgency due to the compounding effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please contact **Pam Yuen, YWCA USA Director of Government Relations**, at [pyuen@ywca.org](mailto:pyuen@ywca.org) or 202-559-7022 with additional questions

## SAFETY FROM GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

---

YWCA is the largest network of domestic and sexual violence service providers in the United States. We advocate for practical solutions to protect survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and eradicate all forms of gender-based violence. Today, women and girls of all ages, income levels, racial and ethnic communities, sexual orientations, gender identities, abilities, and religious affiliations continue to experience violence in the form of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and trafficking. The prolonged effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic, however, continue to increase barriers to services for domestic violence and sexual assault survivors. The crisis puts women of color at even greater risk due to the disproportionate impact of the virus. Against this backdrop, YWCA urges Congress to take action to:

- Reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) including strengthening the economic security, housing, and prevention measures critical to survivors;
- Pass the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) with improvements to maintain the safety, resources, and protections survivors need;
- Maintain strong accountability and oversight of the VAWA and FVPSA implementation process;
- Strengthen and pass the National ACERT Grant Program Authorization Act to address the impact of stress and trauma on children and young adults, especially with the prolonged duration of the COVID-19 pandemic and its disproportionate impact on low-income families and communities of color.

## CHILD CARE

---

Childcare and early learning programs are essential for working women and our nation's economic future. Prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, women across all ages, income levels, and racial identities expressed deep concerns about access to high-quality and affordable childcare. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed economic and racial justice inequities in the childcare system, and exacerbated barriers to women's economic participation as well as inequities for women and families of color. Women have endured – and continue to endure – the economic brunt of the pandemic, with the resulting economic [“Shecession”](#) displacing a disproportionate number of women and women of color out of the workforce. While YWCA is grateful for the initial infusion of funds to stabilize the childcare sector during the initial years of the COVID-19 pandemic, effective oversight is critical to ensure providers, children, and families realize the relief during these times of greatest need.

Building and retaining an equitable childcare workforce is also integral to securing the long-term development and sustainability of the childcare and early learning sector. But 2 years into the pandemic, providers continue to struggle to hire and retain a skilled workforce pivotal to maintaining COVID-19 pandemic safe classrooms sizes and overall operations. With an estimated 4.5 million childcare slots – almost half of the nation's childcare capacity – lost during the pandemic and 1 in 6 childcare jobs lost since the start of the pandemic (many of which were held by women of color), additional action by Congress to expand and strengthen the childcare workforce.

While COVID-19 relief legislation has helped to stabilize the sector, continued prioritization and investment to address our nation's childcare crisis is essential so that businesses can re-open, parents can return to work, and our nation's economy can recover. Guided by the on-the-ground experience and voices of YWCA's childcare providers, we urge Congress to:

- Swiftly implement funding from pandemic relief legislation that allows for the rebuilding of the childcare workforce;
- Pass legislation that invests in the long-term stabilization of the childcare sector and ensures accessible, quality, and affordable child care for all;
- Stabilize the childcare workforce by increasing access to living wages and skills-based training for childcare providers and educators;
- Ensure equitable workplaces for all teachers and child care staff.

## **FEDERAL BUDGET/APPROPRIATIONS**

---

YWCA is on the frontlines of communities, strengthening the pillars of economic security for women and families and meeting their needs in moments of crisis. Every day, we see first-hand the critical difference that federal funding for housing, childcare, domestic violence, and other services makes in communities served by YWCAs. Today, federal grants and funding are a significant source of financial support for YWCA programs and services across the country that impact the health, safety, and economic well-being of YWCA clients.

Faced with sustained high-demand for services and the growing need for flexibility to respond to unpredictable circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, YWCA urges Congress in the FY22 and FY23 Appropriations process to increase federal funding and support for programs and services that:

- Support survivors and prevent gender-based violence through the:
  - Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), particularly VAWA's Transitional Housing program
  - Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)
- Stabilize the childcare sector through the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG)
- Increase access to emergency and transitional housing through the:
  - Emergency Solutions Grant
  - Continuum of Care Program
- Identify and support funding for YWCA programs, mission, and operations through Community Project Requests.

## **RACIAL JUSTICE**

---

YWCA is committed to ensuring that everyone is afforded equal opportunity and equal protection under the law. But too often, stereotypes, biases, and racial power dynamics are embedded in our laws and public policies, impacting a broad range of issues across education, justice, civic engagement, health, and other sectors. The unique experiences of women and girls of color underscore the importance of expedited action by policymakers at all levels to implement and advance racial justice and safety. It is imperative that reform efforts expand gendered narratives to recognize and address the racialized violence and barriers to health and safety that women and girls of color continue to experience.

YWCA's intersectional mission to eliminate racism and empower women demands that we advocate against the oppression and inequities that many groups and individuals endure. YWCA thus urges bold Congressional action to:

- Pass legislation that declares racism a public health crisis and marshals resources across sectors to promote health and well-being in communities of color;

- Pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to ensure all persons have equal access to the ballot box;
- Pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act and taking additional measures to enact laws that safeguard people of color from police violence, increase police accountability, and eliminate racial and religious disparities in policing;
- Pass the Women’s Health Protection Act and ensure equal access to safe, legal abortion care;
- Support inclusive school curriculums that acknowledge the marginalized experiences and perspectives of communities of color.
- Eliminate school discipline disparities, enhancing school climate, and protecting the rights of all students through the Counseling Not Criminalization Act and the Ending PUSHOUT Act.

## **SAFE, FAIR, AND INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES**

---

Women are the primary source of financial support for many families and bear significant caretaking responsibilities at home. At YWCA, we believe no one should have to choose between their livelihoods and their health, their family, or their safety. Yet as a result of their dual roles as caregivers and primary breadwinners, many women in the workforce, particularly women of color, are often forced to choose between their family’s economic security and their health when they or their loved ones need care. Moreover, women continue to face the economic barriers of pay inequity, sexual harassment, and discrimination.

Since the start of the pandemic, intersecting public health, economic, and racial justice crises have both revealed and exacerbated a depth of racial and gender inequity that has long existed in our nation with disproportionate impacts on women, women of color, and their families. As detailed more fully in YWCA’s seminal report on the [2020 Shecession](#), women have endured – and continue to endure – the economic brunt of the pandemic, which has displaced a disproportionate number of women and women of color from the workforce. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic’s displacement of women from the workforce is occurring simultaneous with a radical shift toward automation and a future of work that relies on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields in which women, especially women of color, are vastly outnumbered. Simply put, the widespread and acute economic pain that women have experienced will not end with the pandemic.

YWCA urges immediate Congressional action to address women’s economic security and future of work needs through legislation to:

- Expand the availability of workforce training, particularly programs that increase women's access to high-skill, high wage jobs non-traditional to their gender;
- Pass the Paycheck Fairness Act to work towards equal pay for equal work, and pass legislation prohibiting the use of salary history in job interviews and negotiations;
- Enact non-discrimination laws, such as the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act and Equality Act;
- Prohibit sexual harassment by passing the BE HEARD in the Workplace Act and the EMPOWER Act;
- Codify paid family and medical leave, paid sick leave and safe leave laws to ensure equitable opportunities for all individuals, regardless of zip code, job category, and parenting status, to heal from illness, care for an ailing family member, and seek safety from gender-based violence.

## **STRENGTHENING THE NONPROFIT SECTOR**

---

The nonprofit sector is the backbone of our communities and continues to champion on-the-ground programs, human services, and educational activities for families across the country. Prior to the pandemic, charitable organizations collectively employed over 12.3 million individuals and served as the nation's third largest employer. Today, YWCA remains a national leader in the charitable nonprofit sector, supporting policies that contribute to a strong civic society and culture of giving with a focus on support for women, girls, and their families.

The need to strengthen the nonprofit sector's ability to respond and assist in key recovery efforts, as well as hire and retain critical workers, is more dire than ever. The demand for services provided by nonprofits remains high, but financial support for services has not kept pace. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to take its toll on communities, the American people will remain reliant on charitable nonprofits – like YWCA - for important services and support.

YWCA urges Congress to move swiftly to enact bipartisan policy solutions supported by national, state, and local nonprofits and urgently provide relief and recovery for the nonprofit sector nationwide, including:

- Strengthen economic support for nonprofits so that they are able to maintain operations and retain staff
- Reinstate and strengthen the Employee Retention Tax Credit critical to nonprofits affected by the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Pass the Universal Giving Pandemic Response and Recovery Act to expand and extend the above-the-line or universal charitable deduction.