

U.S. CARE POLICY SCORECARD: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

On the Care Policy Scorecard, the U.S. earns a failing grade when it comes to meeting the needs of both paid and unpaid caregivers, including working families and care workers. While this failure hurts all of us, it poses specific dangers to the health and well-being of women and girls, BIPOC, and immigrants and refugees, and deepens structural inequalities.

Federal policies should center the most underserved communities, particularly women of color and immigrant women. When policies are developed for those who have historically been excluded or overlooked, we have a greater chance of tackling the injustices of poverty, inequality, racism, and sexism.

This brief outlines specific steps the federal government should take to support caregivers and care workers. These recommendations serve as a roadmap for policymakers and civil society organizations. We call on policymakers to:

PASS POLICIES THAT SUPPORT CAREGIVERS IN THE WORKPLACE: PAID LEAVE AND FLEXIBLE SCHEDULES

The U.S. receives its lowest score on policies that support caregivers in the workplace, underscored by the fact that there is no federal mandate for paid leave of any kind. To ensure that individuals who work outside the home can care for themselves and their families, the U.S. must pass paid sick leave and paid family and medical leave legislation. Congress should pass the **Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act** and the **Healthy Families Act**.

Caregivers need consistent but flexible schedules that enable them to meet their caregiving responsibilities. Last-minute changes in work schedules can interfere with important obligations (such as child care pickup and medical appointments). Policies that guarantee both consistency and flexibility in the workplace allow workers to fulfill their caregiving responsibilities while also making a living. The **Schedules That Work Act** would help give workers control and flexibility in their work schedules.

THE SCORECARD ONLINE
[OXF.AM/USCARESCORECARD](https://oxf.am/uscarescorecard)

PASS LAWS THAT STRENGTHEN AND INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY OF CARE SERVICES

Too often, care services are unavailable or unaffordable, leaving millions of people without access to support for child care, elder care, and care for people with disabilities. In addition, insufficient funding often means that the care workforce is underpaid.

The **Child Care for Working Families Act (CCWFA)** and the **Child Care for Every Community (CCEC) Act** would help make child care more accessible and affordable, while increasing pay for child care workers and early learning educators.

The **Better Care Better Jobs (BCBJ) Act** and the **Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Access Act** would expand care services for the elderly and people with disabilities, both groups that rely on Medicaid's home- and community-based services.

STRENGTHEN, INCREASE, AND EXPAND SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Social protection programs should ensure that the most underserved communities are able to get by. As pressures like inflation continue to impact low- and middle-income families, funding for programs like school lunches, SNAP, and WIC should be prioritized, and access should be expanded to include more families. Congress should protect and strengthen SNAP in the **2023 Farm Bill**.

Congress should permanently expand the child tax credit (CTC), including an increase in the amount for



each child and making the credit fully refundable. The COVID-19 CTC expansion lifted 2.9 million children out of poverty. The **Building an Economy for Families Act** includes helpful language on expanding the CTC.

INCREASE THE FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE FOR ALL WORKERS AND STRENGTHEN EQUAL PAY LAWS

Women of color are disproportionately represented among workers who make the minimum wage (the federal minimum has been stuck at \$7.25 an hour for 14 years); millions of low- and minimum- wage workers are parents. Additionally, certain workers can legally be paid less than the minimum wage (students, agricultural workers, workers with disabilities, and tipped workers), which puts them in an even more precarious economic situation.

Congress should pass the **Raise the Wage Act**, which would raise the federal minimum wage and eliminate subminimum wages. It would raise wages for millions of care workers. Congress should also pass the **Paycheck Fairness Act**, which will help the U.S. start to close gender and racial wage gaps.

PASS LAWS THAT STRENGTHEN WORKERS' PROTECTIONS AND RIGHTS, EXPAND RIGHTS AND PROTECTIONS TO ALL WORKERS, AND INCREASE FUNDING TO SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

Federal labor protections should be extended to informal workers, contractors, and employees of companies with 15 or fewer employees. Critical agencies (such as DOL WHD and OSHA) must be funded sufficiently to enforce the laws on the books.

Domestic workers are often unprotected; while some states have passed protections for domestic workers, we need federal laws to do the same. The **Domestic Workers Bill of Rights Act** presents an overarching framework for the rights and protections of domestic workers, and includes provisions

such as paid leave, safety precautions, and fair and fixed scheduling.

The **Part-Time Worker Bill of Rights Act** would provide a wide range of protections and rights to part-time employees, including those who work for employers with 15 or fewer employees.

Discrimination and harassment in the workforce are a serious issue for women and LGBTQIA+ individuals, and protections need to be strengthened. The **Bringing an End to Harassment by Enhancing Accountability and Rejecting Discrimination in the Workplace Act (BE HEARD Act)** would strengthen these protections; it would prohibit mandatory arbitration predispute nondisclosure agreements in employment contracts, expand protections to domestic workers, eliminate the tipped minimum wage, and ensure that businesses have the resources they need to prevent harassment and discrimination.

While the recently passed **Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA)** and **PUMP Act** will cover millions of workers, lawmakers need to expand coverage to *all* workers (including PUMP Act protections for flight crews and PWFA protections for people who work for employers with less than 15 employees).

Finally, unionized workers are more likely to have higher wages, paid leave, and fair schedules. But not everyone has access to a union, and historical exclusions targeting Black workers and other workers of color remain today. Congress should pass the **Protecting Rights to Organize (PRO) Act** to strengthen rights to organize and bargain.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR INEQUALITY

Care work disproportionately falls on women and girls, which is both a cause and a result of gender inequality. Moreover, care sectors are plagued by systemic racism. Care workers, disproportionately women of color and immigrant women, too often live in poverty due to low wages. While some states have policies that seek to fill these gaps, the vast majority of states do not, which deepens inequality from state to state and highlights the need for the federal government to prioritize care policies.

FIGHTING INEQUALITY TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD

Oxfam believes that poverty is a policy choice, and that the ultrawealthy and giant corporations have hijacked our systems to benefit a select few. We are working to redress the balance of power, putting it back in the hands of working families in the US and around the world.

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