

**Forum:** Youth Assembly (YA)  
**Issue:** Preventing the motherhood penalty  
**Student Officer:** Sophia Koumianaki  
**Position:** Deputy President

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## PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Sophia Koumianaki, I am 15 years old and I am a student at Acropolis High School in Nicosia, Cyprus.

My MUN experience began when I was 12 years old back in Greece, when I decided to participate in a conference as a delegate. Now, this will be my 4th time chairing and I have the honor to serve as the Deputy-President of the Youth Assembly.

In today's contemporary society, the motherhood penalty is not as widespread as it once was decades back. Unfortunately, though, that does not imply it does not exist as a concept but also in practice, as, in many occasions, discrimination against pregnant women or mothers may be observed in the workplace. While there are many laws and organizations against the motherhood penalty, they are not considered highly effective in resolving the issue. MUN is once again here to raise awareness on a pressing issue affecting women's lives globally, and provide feasible and realistic solutions and ideas to be discussed live in the conference.

For any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at [sofiakoumianaki@gmail.com](mailto:sofiakoumianaki@gmail.com). I cannot wait to meet you all!

Kind regards,

Sophia Koumianaki

## INTRODUCTION

The challenges faced by women in the workforce are a well-known issue, encompassing a wide range of difficulties including unequal pay and unconscious bias by employers and employees. Despite constituting approximately half of the workforce and outnumbering men in various occupational sectors such as administration, education, healthcare, hospitality and accounting, women continue to earn less than their male counterparts in the same field. This disparity is further compounded for working mothers who face additional disadvantages as a result of

the added responsibility of child-rearing, referred to as the "motherhood penalty" in sociological studies.<sup>1</sup>

Employers have a responsibility to both foster the growth of their businesses and provide a supportive work environment for their employees. For women who are pregnant or new mothers, companies often offer benefits such as the ability to work from home, time off with pay, or extended childcare and maternity benefits. Despite these measures, discrimination against working mothers remains a persistent issue in society. Some companies either intentionally or inadvertently penalize working women who are mothers, based on the assumption that they are less capable, less productive, and less career-oriented than other workers. This is known as "maternity barrier discrimination" and occurs when working women take time off for maternity leave or other important life events and subsequently face difficulties in the workplace upon their return.

Studies conducted by the American Journal of Sociology that track the lifetime wages of women have shown that new mothers who work fewer hours, particularly early in their careers, can experience reduced opportunities for training and lower chances of promotion. These findings further emphasize the urgency of addressing the issue of discrimination against working mothers in the workplace.<sup>2</sup>

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Wage

A payment made by an employer to an employee for work done during a specific period.<sup>3</sup>

### Stereotype

"A set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong"<sup>4</sup>. In this case, it refers to the stereotype that men are more qualified than women in most sectors of the work field.

### Paid leave

Time allowed away from work for holiday, illness, etc. during which employees receive their normal pay.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Budig, Michelle, and England Paula. "The Wage Penalty for Motherhood." *American Sociological Review*, Apr. 2001, p. 22, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2657415>.

<sup>2</sup> *Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty?1 | American Journal of ...*  
www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/511799.

<sup>3</sup> "Wage." *Cambridge Dictionary*, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/wage.

<sup>4</sup> "Stereotype." *Cambridge Dictionary*, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/stereotype.

<sup>5</sup> "Paid Leave." *Cambridge Dictionary*, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/paid-leave.

### Working from home (WFH)

“Used to refer to a person doing their job in their home rather than traveling to an office.”<sup>6</sup>

### Labor Force

The labor force is the total number of employed and unemployed people willing to and available for work. The labor force does not include the jobless who aren't looking for work.<sup>7</sup>

### Motherhood penalty

The phenomenon by which women’s pay decreases once they become mothers.<sup>8</sup>

### Parental Benefits

Parental benefits are types of Employment Insurance benefits. Employees can apply for such benefits in cases of pregnancy or needed time to raise a newborn baby or an adopted child.<sup>9</sup>

### Hiring Bias

Employers often exert unconscious bias upon hiring candidates for working positions, in essence forming an opinion about candidates based solely on first impressions or personal beliefs.<sup>10</sup>

### Gender Wage Gap

The gender wage gap is defined as the difference between the median earnings of women relative to the median earnings of men.<sup>11</sup>

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### The Motherhood Penalty

The motherhood penalty refers to the systemic disadvantage faced by women in the workforce after becoming mothers. Research has shown that mothers on average

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<sup>6</sup> “What Is WFH?” *WalkMe*, 11 Sept. 2022, [www.walkme.com/glossary/wfh/](http://www.walkme.com/glossary/wfh/).

<sup>7</sup> Amadeo, Kimberly. “Are You Officially in the Labor Force?” *The Balance*, [www.thebalancemoney.com/labor-force-definition-how-it-affects-the-economy-4045035](http://www.thebalancemoney.com/labor-force-definition-how-it-affects-the-economy-4045035).

<sup>8</sup> “The Motherhood Penalty.” *AAUW*, 1 Sept. 2022, [www.aauw.org/issues/equity/motherhood/](http://www.aauw.org/issues/equity/motherhood/).

<sup>9</sup> “What Are Maternity and Parental Benefits?” *Settlement.Org | Information Newcomers Can Trust*, [settlement.org/ontario/daily-life/life-events/birth/what-are-maternity-and-parental-benefits/](http://settlement.org/ontario/daily-life/life-events/birth/what-are-maternity-and-parental-benefits/).

<sup>10</sup> Pavlou, Christina. “Unconscious Bias in Recruitment: How Can You Remove It?” *Recruiting Resources: How to Recruit and Hire Better*, 26 July 2022, [resources.workable.com/stories-and-insights/unconscious-bias-in-recruitment](http://resources.workable.com/stories-and-insights/unconscious-bias-in-recruitment).

<sup>11</sup> “Earnings and Wages - Gender Wage Gap - OECD Data.” *The OECD*, [data.oecd.org/earnwage/gender-wage-gap.htm](http://data.oecd.org/earnwage/gender-wage-gap.htm).

earn 12.5% less total income over their working lives as compared to their male or non-parenting female counterparts, even when working the same number of hours.<sup>12</sup> This often leads to missed opportunities for promotions and advancements, simply because of their status as mothers.

Studies have shown that women from all socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to be employed after giving birth, and those who are rehired may experience a decrease in their hourly wages. This presents a concerning issue for mothers, as the cost of raising a child is significant. Additionally, data from around the world indicate that the pay gap may increase as children grow older. This can result in the loss of various occupational opportunities that may go unnoticed by the mother, including the deprivation of education and training opportunities and the denial of quality projects that can lead to promotion.

### Effects of the penalty on women

Childbirth has significant consequences for women in terms of their occupational status. Low wages for mothers pose risks to the well-being of the family, as the post-birth income may not be sufficient to support family members. This is particularly true for single mothers, who are the most at-risk group as they may not have financial support from their spouses. While some countries provide financial benefits to families with multiple children or single-parent households, these benefits are often not enough to meet the basic needs of families today. According to the National Women's Law Center in the United States, the 2019 maternity leave pay gap in the country cost frontline mothers between \$9,500 and \$19,000.<sup>13</sup>

A study conducted by Stanford University found that low-paid mothers often have less work experience, which can lead to lower productivity and fewer promotions. This is because they may be afraid to quit and look for another job, as their motherhood status may be viewed as a concern for their availability to perform in their assigned role. This lack of motivation extends to lower productivity for these individuals, as insufficiently paid mothers may become demotivated and unwilling to work. Finally, employers may discriminate against working mothers based on the belief that they are more likely to prioritize their responsibilities to their children over their work.

### Reasons behind the discrimination against working mothers

#### Physical and mental demands of parenting

The demands of parenting are both physically and mentally demanding, with the process of pregnancy and childbirth having significant impacts on a woman's health and well-being. The changes in hormone levels during pregnancy can lead to a range of emotional and psychological symptoms, such as anxiety, fatigue, depression, and

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<sup>12</sup> Wardecki, Ava. "The Motherhood Penalty." *Global Women*, 03 2021, <https://globalwomen.org.nz/news/motherhood-penalty/>

<sup>13</sup> Maddox, Choncé. "The Motherhood Penalty Affects Everything from a Woman's Wages to Hiring and Promotions after Having a Child." *Business Insider*, Business Insider, [www.businessinsider.com/personal-finance/motherhood-penalty](http://www.businessinsider.com/personal-finance/motherhood-penalty).

mood swings. These challenges, coupled with the physical demands of childbirth, can make it difficult for a woman to return to work and fully participate in the labor force, particularly in environments that lack favorable maternity leave regulations.

### Childcare costs and responsibilities

For many working mothers, the cost of childcare is a major barrier to returning to work. In addition, the demands of caring for young children can make it difficult for mothers to balance their responsibilities at home with their employment. In some cases, mothers may be unable to afford to leave their children in daycare, while in others, they may struggle with the emotional demands of separating from their children.

### Impacts on future prospects and income

The more time that working mothers spend out of the labor force, the greater the impact on their future employment prospects and earning potential. This can lead to a vicious cycle of discrimination and disadvantage, with women being less likely to be offered promotions or high-paying jobs, and more likely to experience wage stagnation over the course of their careers.

### Widening the gender pay gap

In statistical analyses, it has been observed that the wage gap between men and women tends to widen as women enter the age range at which they are most likely to become pregnant. This is an indication that discrimination against working mothers is not only a real phenomenon, but also one that is likely to persist over time.

### Hiring bias

The discrimination against working mothers is a complex issue that has various roots and consequences. A recent study has revealed that managers tend to prefer hiring women without children to mothers and pay them less when they do. Recruiters were found to interview female applicants without children twice as often as female applicants with children.<sup>14</sup> This contributes to the stereotype of obstetric punishment, where employers believe that mothers with children are less productive and cannot work long hours due to the attention required by a newborn.

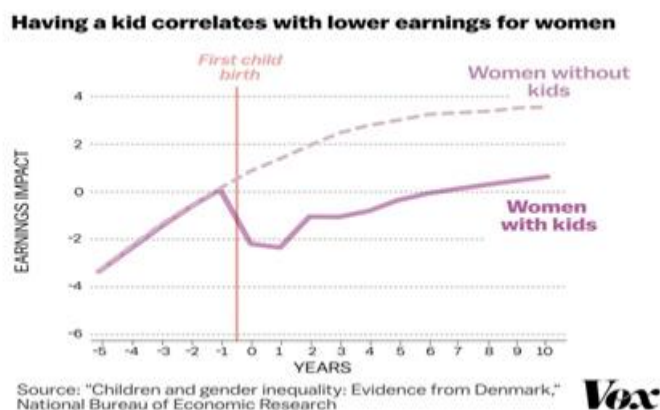


Figure 1: Wage gap between women with children and women without children following the birth of the first child.

<sup>14</sup> Kleven, Henrik, et al. "Children and Gender Inequality: Evidence from Denmark." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, [www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257%2Fapp.20180010](http://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257%2Fapp.20180010).

The consequences of this bias are severe, as it results in women being consistently refused promotions, opportunities for professional development, demanding duties, training, and other prospects for a better occupational status. In 2014, a survey of 165,000 workers from various American firms discovered a significant connection between the motherhood penalty and the low representation of women in management positions.<sup>15</sup> This is one of the many harmful effects of the motherhood penalty, as it leaves nearly no women, especially mothers, in positions of power. The study revealed a relationship between women's childbearing years and the age range typically associated with professional development, where many women are most likely to abandon their jobs.

### Gender Wage Gap

The gender pay gap, which is defined as the difference between the annual earnings of men and women, is another significant issue facing working mothers. Women make up half of the college-educated workforce in most countries, yet the gender pay gap persists. A recent study by Pew Research Center found that in 2020, a woman will earn 84% of what men earn on average. For working mothers, the gap is even wider. According to a laboratory experiment and test study, women who stated that they were mothers on their applications were less likely to be considered for hiring and were offered lower salaries. The suggested salary for women with children was \$11,000 less than that for women without children.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast, having children has a limited effect on a father's income, according to the International Labor Organization. In some cases, fathers even seem to enjoy a "financial advantage" over males without children. This phenomenon reflects and promotes traditional gender roles in family responsibility sharing and is an obstacle to progress towards equality. However, this does not apply to the same extent in all countries. To tackle this problem, it is important to establish appropriate policies. However, even with the right policies in place, it takes time to change long-held beliefs and attitudes. According to Eurobarometer statistics for 2017, 84% of EU women and 78% of men prefer that men take parental leave. These figures show that, while many Europeans support the concept of gender equality, very few fathers in the EU take paternity leave.

### COVID-19 and the motherhood penalty

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on working mothers has been significant and widespread, as they have had to navigate the challenges posed by the closure of daycare centers and schools, the need to work from home, and the isolation of support systems. According to the Institute of Labor Economics, in 2014 working

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<sup>15</sup> "She's Price(d)Less: The Economics of the Gender Pay Gap ." *KPMG*, [home.kpmg/xx/en/home/industries/financial-services/asset-management.html](https://home.kpmg/xx/en/home/industries/financial-services/asset-management.html)

<sup>16</sup> *Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty?* - *JSTOR*. [www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/511799](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/511799).

mothers faced great difficulties due to the epidemic.<sup>17</sup> Over 3.5 million mothers with school-aged children lost their employment in the United States and most European nations in the spring of 2020.<sup>18</sup>

The United Nations International Labor Organization's March 2022 report estimated that the labor force participation rate of mothers with young children declined by 1.8% from 2019 to 2020 in 189 countries and territories, including the United States.<sup>19</sup> This is in stark contrast to the decline in the participation rate of fathers with young children, which was only 0.1%. Even before the pandemic, the labor force participation rate of mothers was lower than the overall female labor force participation rate, which stood at 62.1% for women aged 25-54 who have a partner and at least one child under the age of 6. In contrast, the labor force participation rate of fathers was 97.1%.

The COVID-19 epidemic has had a particularly negative impact on working women, as an estimated 2 million mothers abandoned the workforce. This has led to a decrease in the diversity of the labor force and a decline in women's professional and economic independence. This time away from work may harm their career prospects and well-being, and could potentially lead to poverty later in life. Additionally, women who are not financially independent are more likely to be in relationships that are unpleasant or aggressive.

The impact of the epidemic on working mothers has been greater than on working fathers, as mothers are often required to care for their children at home, which forces them to either work from home or abandon their jobs completely. This trend has not boded well for the financial future of women, as the Global Gender Gap Report estimates that the worldwide gender gap has increased from 99.5 to 135.6 years, meaning that it will take more than 135 years to close the gender pay gap. It is imperative that this ongoing issue be addressed and that steps be taken to correct the highly negative impact the pandemic has had on working mothers.

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<sup>17</sup>“ The Motherhood Pay Gap : a Review of the Issues, Theory - ILO .” *International Labour Organization*, [www.ilo.org/](http://www.ilo.org/).

<sup>18</sup> Heggeness, Misty L. “Tracking Job Losses for Mothers of School-Age Children during a Health Crisis.” *Census.gov*, 8 Oct. 2021, [www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/03/moms-work-and-the-pandemic.html](http://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/03/moms-work-and-the-pandemic.html).

<sup>19</sup> “Over 2 Million Moms Left the Labour Force in 2020 According to New Global Estimates.” ILOSTAT, 9 Jan. 2023, [ilostat.ilo.org/over-2-million-moms-left-the-labour-force-in-2020-according-to-new-global-estimates/](http://ilostat.ilo.org/over-2-million-moms-left-the-labour-force-in-2020-according-to-new-global-estimates/).



## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

### United States of America

In the United States, the "motherhood penalty" still exists. Even though education and occupational experience for women have improved and the pay gap hasn't widened in over 30 years, mothers continue to struggle at work. Mothers lost \$16,000 a year in income, according to an analysis of 2018 census data by the nonprofit National Women's Law Center.<sup>20</sup> A mother earns 71 cents for every dollar a man makes in the United States. She also has to deal with the aforementioned concerns of employers about her devotion to her job when combined with her motherhood duties, irrespective of her performance or experience. According to a recent survey by Bright Horizons, which manages over 1,000 preschools and kindergartens nationwide, 41% of working Americans believe working mothers are less dedicated.<sup>21</sup> According to the report, more than a third of working mothers want flexible schedules. Regarding reporting a pregnancy, the percentage of women worried about telling their boss nearly doubled in five years, from 12% in 2014 to 21% of her in 2019.

### Canada

A 2015 United Nations study found that mothers in Canada earn 5 cents less an hour than women without children.<sup>22</sup> A study by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights expressed concern about the country's persistent gender wage gap and how it "disproportionately harms low-income women, especially minority and indigenous women." The difference was more noticeable in Alberta and Nova Scotia.

Mothers take most of their parental leave and are, therefore, likely to be less active than fathers during that time. Canadian mothers get 40 weeks of paternity leave, with fathers being able to take up to 5 weeks to take care of their child. Yet, only 1/4 of fathers take it.

### United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is one of the countries where the motherhood penalty is evident in most of the sectors of the economy. In the UK, mothers who want to have children and want to work face many institutional barriers, including high child support costs. In fact, the country is the second most expensive childcare system in the world after

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<sup>20</sup> "Mothers Lose \$16,000 Annually to the Wage Gap, NWLC Analysis Shows." *National Women's Law Center*, 5 Jan. 2022, [nwlc.org/press-release/mothers-lose-16000-annually-to-the-wage-gap-nwlc-analysis-shows/](https://nwlc.org/press-release/mothers-lose-16000-annually-to-the-wage-gap-nwlc-analysis-shows/).

<sup>21</sup> *Modern Family Index 2018 - Bright Horizons*. [www.brighthorizons.com/-/media/bh-new/newsroom/media-kit/mfi\\_2018\\_report\\_final.ashx](https://www.brighthorizons.com/-/media/bh-new/newsroom/media-kit/mfi_2018_report_final.ashx).

<sup>22</sup> "Earnings of Women with and without Children." *Statistics Canada: Canada's National Statistical Agency / Statistique Canada : Organisme Statistique National Du Canada*, 27 Nov. 2015, [www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-001-x/2009103/article/10823-eng.htm](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-001-x/2009103/article/10823-eng.htm).



Slovakia. This means that many mothers have to work long hours just to obtain the financial capabilities to systematically pay someone to take care of their children. Pre-pandemic inventory was already very low, and nearly a quarter of childcare was likely to close in the next six months when the government began funding the industry in December 2020. According to ONS data, women accomplish 60% more unpaid work than men. All this work, all social engagement, is completely unrewarded and undervalued.

Most women work part-time to supplement their income in times close to their child's birth. Still, part-time jobs pay an average of £5 less an hour than full-time jobs, and part-time jobs reduce promotion opportunities by more than half.<sup>23</sup>

### Australia

Even though Australian women have statistically proven that they are the main source of income for their households, they face a 10-year “maternity penalty” in earnings, earning less than half as much as they received pre-pregnancy in the first five years after giving birth. According to an economist's analysis given at an Australian Economic Association conference, not only do women suffer long-term financial disadvantages after delivery, but work satisfaction also decreases before and after childbirth. Five years after giving birth, Australian women earn less than half of what their spouses earn and are less pleased with their careers. Following the child's birth, they begin experiencing significant financial losses as a result of reduced working hours and time off from work. The penalties remain in place for the first decade that passes after birth. Even women who continue to work have to sustain some financial burden, as it has been calculated that their income is reduced by 5%.<sup>24</sup>

### The Mom Project

The Mom Project is a US-based digital talent marketplace that helps women improve their outreach to find the right job. For example, a woman can use her Resume Rev program to complete her profile, follow the advice presented, and ultimately create a downloadable structured resume. There is also a two-sided program called RALLY that contains a Booster and a booster match together. Already hired boosters help mothers find their ideal job and return to work. Interestingly, you don't have to be a mother to participate in this program, but you must live in the United States. The

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<sup>23</sup> “Caregiving in Crisis: Gender Inequality in Paid and Unpaid Work during COVID-19.” *OECD*, [www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/caregiving-in-crisis-gender-inequality-in-paid-and-unpaid-work-during-covid-19-3555d164/](http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/caregiving-in-crisis-gender-inequality-in-paid-and-unpaid-work-during-covid-19-3555d164/).

<sup>24</sup> “Overconsumption in Australia .” *The Australia Institute*, 3 Jan. 2023, [australiainstitute.org.au/](http://australiainstitute.org.au/).

project also has its own RISE grant for mothers of color, giving them the opportunity to receive continuing education certificates and community support throughout the time of upbringing of their child.

### The WoMo network

The WoMo Network is a UK membership site that provides women with practical guidance and suggestions on parenting and employment. The organization aims to alleviate any legal concerns that may arise during the process of childbirth, making this journey less difficult not only for women but also for employers. There additionally is a blog where you may discover articles on every topic you can think of. From discussing a teenager and her STDs to discussing a working mother throughout a pandemic. In addition, the WoMo network was named one of the Top 100 Working Mom blogs and websites to follow in 2021.

### UN Women

UN Women is a United Nations organization dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women was founded to take positive steps to meet the needs of women and girls around the world. On May 8, 2015, the organization released parenting penalty statistics on its website, revealing that women undertake 2.5 times more unpaid care and household labor than men do, limiting opportunities for satisfactory paid work. Additionally, the labor force participation rate for women between the ages of 25 and 54 is decreasing in the United States. In addition, income inequality is greater among women with children. Finally, employment rates for women with two children in EU countries that provide generous paid leave, quality childcare services and flexible work policies are much higher than in countries without such support.

### International Labor Organization

The International Labor Organization, otherwise known by the international acronym ILO, is an autonomous international intergovernmental organization affiliated to the United Nations. The organization has done a lot to raise awareness of the issue at hand, mainly through publishing several articles and documents on its website that address various aspects of the situation. In particular, the organization publishes assessments on the motherhood pay gap each year on Mother's Day. Additionally, after the epidemic, the International Labor Organization produced a number of reports on the gender pay gap during COVID-19.

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
5 February, 1993	The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is established "to balance the demands of the workplace with the needs of families.
1978	The Pregnancy Discrimination Act (PDA) of 1978 amends Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to "prohibit sex discrimination on the basis of pregnancy.
April 2001	Michelle Budig and Paula England coin the phrase "motherhood penalty" in their 2001 study, "The Wage Penalty for Motherhood.
July 2010	UN Women is established.
2016	The "Mom Project" is created.
2016	The WoMo Network is founded by working Mom, Elyse Lupin, President of Elysium Marketing Group.
14 May 2021	The US House of Representatives passes the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, which outlaws practices that deny reasonable accommodation to people impacted by pregnancy, childbirth, or other medical conditions.

## PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

### The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978

As established above, discrimination in the workplace is prohibited. Under the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, pregnant women may not be denied employment, promotion, obligations, benefits, training, or other work-related opportunities, and be dismissed, demoted, or punished.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> "The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978." *US EEOC*, [www.eeoc.gov/statutes/pregnancy-discrimination-act-1978](http://www.eeoc.gov/statutes/pregnancy-discrimination-act-1978).

In hindsight, the law passed has helped the situation. Before the law's establishment, women could be fired immediately if they reported their pregnancy to their employers. That is no longer possible. The 1978 law, however, did not completely improve the situation. Unfortunately, it does not address the idea that employers consider pregnant women less valuable than other workers.

### Pregnant Workers Fairness Act

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, enacted by the U.S. House of Representatives on May 14, 2021, prohibits practices that deny reasonable accommodation to those affected by a pregnancy, childbirth, or other medical problems.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike most developed countries, the United States do not have a government-paid leave program that allows parents, especially women, to take time off without losing their jobs. Nonetheless, many companies, mostly large ones, are increasingly granting paid leave in the absence of government regulation.

According to a recent report from A Better Balance, pregnant workers are denied accommodation in many cases. This is due to the high standards set by current regulations such as the Pregnant Discrimination Act.<sup>27</sup>

### Working Mom Initiative

Based in Canada, the Working Mom Initiative attempted to connect employers with mothers, caregivers and other candidates who needed flexible working arrangements. The initiative aimed to help the candidate sidestep her exact eight-hour office schedule and fight for gender equality and women's empowerment. It's also interesting to note the attention paid to family-friendly communities and work-life balance, which are important for working moms.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

### Implement 'returnships'

The Implementation Program consists of high-level internships designed specifically for adults who have not worked for a long period of time. This makes it easier for mothers to return to work and ensures that they build upon their previous achievements. Employers can reduce the parenting penalty by improving policies and practices to provide employment support and economic equality for working mothers.

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<sup>26</sup> *H.R.1065 - 117th Congress (2021-2022): Pregnant Workers Fairness Act.*  
[www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1065](http://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1065).

<sup>27</sup> *Why the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act Still Hasn't Passed - Fast Company.*  
[www.fastcompany.com/90771614/why-the-pregnant-workers-fairness-act-still-hasnt-passed](http://www.fastcompany.com/90771614/why-the-pregnant-workers-fairness-act-still-hasnt-passed).

Destroying outdated and inaccurate workplace stereotypes is essential to the professional and personal growth and well-being of working mothers.

#### Provide learning opportunities to help women reach leadership positions

Another way companies can help working mothers achieve their career goals and progress to more leadership roles is by offering learning opportunities that enable career growth within the company. Women have a lot to think about and finding the time to invest in themselves can be difficult. This can be achieved by the company developing career maps for women. This map offers practical advice and recommendations for parenting and work, and the educational opportunities they need along the way. This shows respect for women's achievements and verifies companies' commitments to help them be their best at home and at work.

#### Equal parental leave

The United Nations can help establish equitable parental leave programs in the workplace. Women can manage childcare responsibilities, close the gender pay gap, and earn equal opportunities. For example, employers are less likely to discriminate against women on the basis of their fertility potential if parents are provided with equal parental leave, regardless of sex or gender.

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