

DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CAUCUS

May 17, 2024

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro,

As you continue your work on the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) appropriations bills, we urge you to support programs that lift up girls and women both domestically and abroad. We were relieved to see the final Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) appropriations bills mostly preserved key funding for critical programs, that the most devastating cuts were averted and that new discriminatory anti-abortion riders were dropped. We urge you to keep those harmful riders out of the FY25 process, and for the Committee to recognize and address the needs of girls, women, and families to advance gender equality, safety, and financial security in the FY25 appropriations bills. We look forward to working together.

Below are a few of the key provisions we urge you to include and make significant investments in:

The Care Economy

America is in a care crisis, and we must address it. We were grateful to see the additional \$1 billion investment in child care and early childhood in the FY24 appropriations bills, and urge you to build on this progress—especially as families continue to feel the impact of critical child care funding that expired in 2023. Women also make up around 60% of the “sandwich generation,” meaning they care for both their parents and children. With the costs of child care and long-term care surging, we must make robust investments in the care economy to help women and families succeed such as:

- Significantly increasing funding for key child care and early childhood programs such as the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), Head Start, Early Head Start, and Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS).
- Providing robust funding for Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) so our most vulnerable can access the care they need, and caregivers are supported.
- Investing in paid family and medical leave so women can take the time they need and return to the workforce without the stress of losing their job and essential income.

Women's Health

Women should have access to the health care and resources they need to stay healthy and fully control their own bodies, including reproductive care. We will not stand for partisan provisions on reproductive freedom included in FY25 appropriations and we urge robust funding for reproductive care. We also urge increased investments in addressing the high maternal mortality rate in the United States, which is three times higher for Black moms. We must invest in women's health, this includes:

- Robustly funding all federal programs that provide services to pregnant women, prevent maternal deaths, improve maternal health, and reduce inequities in maternal health outcomes.
- Excluding the Hyde amendment and other harmful riders that inhibit access to care.
- Robustly funding Title X Family Planning Program and all other programs that provide women with access to family planning services and high-quality health care.
- Fully funding programs and initiatives to address the mental health crisis that is disproportionately impacting adolescent girls and providing support for mental health services for all women.
- Funding programs such as National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's (NICHD) so more grants can be awarded to improve child and reproductive health, including in-vitro fertilization (IVF).
- Robustly investing in programs and directing agencies to research and find solutions to diseases and risk factors that solely or disproportionately impact women, such as menopause, breast cancer, endometriosis, gynecological cancers, and pelvic floor disorders; and ensuring women and pregnant and lactating women are included in clinical research.

Nutrition Support for Women and Kids

Millions of low-income women and children depend on federal nutrition programs to keep food on the table. We were grateful that the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) was ultimately fully funded in the FY24 appropriations packages, but we are concerned that its future was ever in question. We must keep women and kids fed and healthy by:

- Fully funding nutrition programs including WIC, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and other programs that ensure women and their children do not go hungry and can always access healthy nutritious foods.

Educational and Workplace Equity for Women

Women make up a significant part of the American workforce and own over 14 million small businesses. Women are critical to our economy despite facing many challenges including a persistent gender wage gap, occupational segregation, harassment in the workplace, and a lack of access to care. We must invest in working women and women entrepreneurs because when women succeed, our whole economy succeeds. We must also invest in educational equity for young women. This includes:

- Providing robust funding for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to enforce essential laws such as the *Pregnant Workers Fairness Act* and to resume gender pay data collection. To fight pay inequity, we must identify it.
- Including language and providing robust funding to reestablish the National Equal Pay Enforcement Task Force to increase interagency coordination, recommend data collection improvements, and address persistent challenges in closing the pay gap.
- Providing funding for the Department of Labor's Women's Bureau to help ensure all women have equal opportunity in the workforce.
- Providing robust funding for Office of Federal Contract Compliance Program (OFCCP) to ensure those who do business with the federal government fulfill the promise of equal employment opportunities for all.
- Supporting workforce development programs and educational programs to ensure all women have equal access to lucrative and fulfilling careers at any stage in life, whether or not they have a college degree or have taken a break in their career.
- Providing robust funding for the Women's Business Center program and for other programs that deliver entrepreneurial development opportunities for women.
- Increasing funding for Title I, IDEA, STEM programs and other educational initiatives so our young girls have access to quality educational opportunities to set them on a path of success for their future.
- Supporting women in apprenticeships including through investments in programs to recruit and retain women in apprenticeships and to keep them safe on the job.
- Fully restoring and funding the Office of Diversity and Inclusion in the U.S. House of Representatives to ensure the staff of the people's house reflects the diversity of our country.
- Increase funding for the Wage and Hour Division to protect and support domestic workers from labor exploitation, who are overwhelmingly women and are often employed in private homes, including as nannies, housekeepers, and health aides.

Women in the Military and Women Veterans

Servicewomen and women veterans sacrifice so much to defend our freedoms, so we must defend their rights to access health care and other necessary services. According to recent studies, government support is not keeping up with the growing numbers of servicewomen, women veterans, and their needs. We must support and protect these women. This includes:

- Keeping women in the military safe by robustly funding programs that prevent sexual harassment and assault and support survivors.
- Ensuring servicewomen are protected in combat by enabling the Department of Defense (DOD) to provide properly fitting gear.
- Increase funding for women veteran's healthcare programs to enhance their overall care and ensure the growing women veteran's population is properly served.
- Supporting programs that assist servicewomen in finding employment after their service as well as women veterans, and military spouses.

Gender-Based Violence Prevention

Over half of all women have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime. This is unacceptable. We must fully support efforts to prevent gender-based violence and support survivors. This includes:

- Fully funding the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) which includes various programs that aim to end violence and support women through a whole-of-government approach and effort.
- Robustly funding programs and initiatives across the federal government that work to prevent gender-based violence such as the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative, the Office of Family Violence Prevention Services, and the Domestic Violence Hotline.
- Providing support for the use of forensic genetic genealogical DNA analysis and other methods to help close unsolved cases and identify victims.

Women and Girls Abroad

Women and girls around the world deserve our continued investments to help them thrive. As a country, we have worked to advance the needs of women and girls everywhere, and we urge you to continue this commitment. This includes:

- Excluding the Helms amendment so women abroad can access reproductive care.
- Providing funds to support key initiatives and offices that advance gender equality such as the Women, Peace and Security Strategy, the Gender Equity and Equality Action Fund and supporting the Office of Global Women's Issues.
- Providing robust funding to prevent and respond to gender-based violence worldwide.
- Funding programs that specifically help women participate in the economy and support trade capacity building so women can engage in the global market and build their own wealth.
- Providing support for programs that empower adolescent girls abroad and that provide basic education programs.
- Supporting the Global Equality Fund at the State Department and the USAID Inclusive Development Hub's Protection of LGBTQI+ Persons so all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, are protected.

Thank you for your consideration of these necessary investments to support and advance women and girls. Together we can and will continue to build a better world for women and girls, and we look forward to your continued partnership to get the job done.

Sincerely,



Lois Frankel
Chair
Democratic Women's Caucus



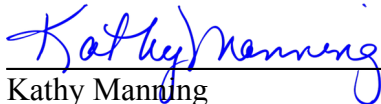
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CC:

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair, United States Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Susan Collins, Vice Chair, United States Senate Committee on Appropriations