



# Fast Facts: Economic Security for Texas Families

By Ryan Erickson, Danielle Corley, and Maggie Jo Buchanan June 29, 2016

In Texas and across the United States, Americans need policies that promote economic security for women and families. Working families need higher livable wages, women need and deserve equal pay for equal work, and parents need to be able to maintain good jobs that allow them to work and raise their children simultaneously. Strong economic security policies will enable Texas women and families to get ahead—not just get by.

For most Texans, the days of the stay-at-home mom are history: Mothers are the primary or co-breadwinners in 61 percent of Texas families.<sup>1</sup> This is not surprising since most women in the state work—more than 65 percent of Texas women are in the labor force.<sup>2</sup> If women had not increased their labor force participation rate between 1963 and 2013, inequality in the state would have grown 58 percent more quickly.<sup>3</sup> To promote women's economic security, Texas' policies should address the needs of working mothers and reflect the roles that women are playing to provide for their families. Here are seven areas in which policymakers and advocates can help women bolster their families' economic security.

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## Provide access to paid sick days

Everyone gets sick, but not everyone is afforded the time to get better. Many women go to work sick or leave their sick children at home alone because they fear that they will be fired for missing work. Allowing employees to earn paid sick days helps keep families, communities, and the economy healthy.

- About 40 million U.S. employees, or 40 percent of the nation's private-sector workforce, do not have access to paid sick days.<sup>4</sup> In Texas, the rate is even higher: 45 percent of private-sector workers, or more than 4 million people, do not have paid sick days.<sup>5</sup>
- If employees must stay home from work because they or their children are ill, the loss of pay can take a serious toll—particularly on low-income workers, who are the least likely to have access to paid sick leave.

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## Expand paid family and medical leave

Access to paid family and medical leave would allow workers to be with their newborn children during the crucial first stages of a child's life, to care for an aging parent or spouse, or to recover from their own illness.

- The United States is the only developed country that does not guarantee access to paid maternity leave and one of only three developed countries that do not offer broader family and medical leave insurance.<sup>6</sup> Only 12 percent of workers in the United States have access to paid family leave through their employers.<sup>7</sup>
- The National Partnership for Women & Families gave Texas a “D” on policies that help parents of newborn children. Texas does not expand upon federal rights or protections for new and expecting parents who work in the private sector.<sup>8</sup>

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## Ensure equal pay

Although federal law prohibits unequal pay for equal work, there is more to do to ensure that both women and men enjoy the fullest protections against discrimination across Texas.

- Women are the primary, sole, or co-breadwinners in nearly two-thirds of U.S. families but continue to earn less than their male counterparts.<sup>9</sup> Latinas and African American women experience the sharpest pay disparities.<sup>10</sup>
- Texas women earn just 79 cents for every dollar that Texas men earn.<sup>11</sup> The wage gap is even larger for black women and Latinas in Texas, who respectively earn 59 cents and 44 cents for every dollar that white men earn.<sup>12</sup>

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## Expand quality, affordable child care

Families need child care to be able to work, but many families lack access to high-quality child care options. Parents want and need child care that supports young children's development and adequately prepares them for school.

- Fifty-nine percent of Texas children younger than age 6 have all available parents in the workforce, which makes access to affordable, high-quality child care a necessity.<sup>13</sup>
- For a Texas family with one infant and one 4-year-old, child care costs an average of \$15,489 per year, or more than one-quarter of the median income for a Texas family with children.<sup>14</sup>

- Under the Center for American Progress' High Quality Child Care Tax Credit, families in Texas would, on average, save \$5,419 annually compared with current child care costs.<sup>15</sup> CAP's proposal would also create a financial incentive for child care providers to improve their quality, therefore expanding access to high-quality child care programs for Texans.

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## Increase the minimum wage

Women make up a disproportionate share of low-wage workers, and raising the minimum wage would help hardworking women across Texas better support their families.

- Women make up nearly two-thirds of all minimum wage workers in the United States.<sup>16</sup>
- Increasing the minimum wage to \$12 per hour would boost wages for nearly 1.9 million women in Texas and nearly 20 million women nationally.<sup>17</sup> Nearly 55 percent of the workers in Texas who would be affected by raising the minimum wage to \$12 are women.<sup>18</sup>

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## Guarantee access to quality health care

Women need comprehensive reproductive health services—including access to abortion care—in order to thrive as breadwinners, caregivers, and employees.

- Today, 766,000 Texans fall in the health insurance coverage gap—more than one-quarter of all people who would have been insured if their state had expanded Medicaid. And more than 60 percent of Hispanic adults in the United States that fall into this coverage gap reside in Texas.<sup>20</sup>
- In the wake of widespread clinic closures as a result of the omnibus anti-choice law referred to as H.B. 2, between 100,000 and 240,000 women have attempted to end their pregnancies without medical assistance.<sup>21</sup>
- In 2013, 1,774,240 Texas women were in need of publicly supported family planning services and supplies.<sup>22</sup> Between 2011 and 2014, 55 percent of women reported at least one barrier to accessing reproductive health care services, including cervical cancer screening or family planning services.<sup>23</sup>
- Funding for family planning services in Texas has been especially threatened by recent legislative cuts. In 2011, the state legislature cut \$73 million in family planning funding—a full two-thirds of the family planning budget—resulting in the loss of access to care for an estimated 147,000 low-income Texas women.<sup>24</sup> While some funding has been restored, recent research found that these cuts have adversely affected a woman's ability to receive contraception while also significantly increasing the number of births covered by Medicaid.<sup>25</sup>

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## Promote women's political leadership

Across the United States, women are dramatically underrepresented in political office: They make up 51 percent of the population but only 29 percent of elected officials.<sup>26</sup>

- Women make up 50 percent of Texas' population but only 33 percent of its elected officials.<sup>27</sup>
- Women of color make up 28 percent of the state's population but only 11 percent of its officeholders.<sup>28</sup>

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## Endnotes

- 1 Data are taken from Sarah Jane Glynn and Jeff Chapman's analysis of Miriam King and others, "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 3.0," available at <http://cps.ipums.org/cps/index.shtml> (last accessed June 2016).
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- 13 "Available parents" refers to "resident parents." See Kids Count Data Center, "Children Under Age 6 with All Parents in the Labor Force," available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5057-children-under-age-6-with-all-available-parents-in-the-labor-force?loc=7&loct=2#detailed/2/45/false/869,36,868,867,133/any/11472,11473> (last accessed June 2016).
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- 15 The cost reduction estimate assumes that the family using the credit is earning \$40,000 annually. Katie Hamm and Carmel Martin, "A New Vision for Child Care in the United States" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2015), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/report/2015/09/02/119944/a-new-visionfor-child-care-in-the-united-states-3/>.
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