YWCA Texas Affiliates
Eliminating Racism
Empowering Women

87th Texas Legislative Session
Public Policy Priorities

Background:

YWCA USA is on a mission to eliminate racism, empower women, stand up for social justice, help families, and strengthen communities. YWCA has been at the forefront of the most pressing social movements for more than 160 years--from voting rights to civil rights. Today, the Texas affiliates of the YWCA are committed to carrying out our mission through advocacy. We are determined to ensure that our state addresses longstanding systemic and economic barriers for women, pre and post COVID-19 pandemic.

Our priorities for the 2021 legislative session are within three crucial areas:

1. Childcare
2. Economic Empowerment and Advancement for Women
3. Racial Justice

It is our hope that lawmakers recognize the importance of the areas where we work day in and day out for women, children, and our communities writ large. In particular, we urge the Texas Legislature to prioritize the needs of women and girls of color and children.

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1 Childcare: Increase Access to Quality Child Care for Priority Populations

According to a report by the Joint Economic Congressional Committee, as of August, approximately 214,000 child care workers—one-fifth of the pre-pandemic level—are still out of a job. The pandemic has forced providers to close their doors permanently, in some instances. In Texas, as of mid-August more than a quarter of the state’s roughly 17,000 child care providers open in February were closed, according to Health and Human Services Commission.

2.5 million mothers in Texas are working mothers. For working mothers and families, childcare is the backbone of their financial survivability. Texas must act this session to ensure that our childcare system and providers can safely continue to keep their doors open and provide women and families with the care needed to get them back at work.

We support childcare policies that will:

- Support providing livable wage compensation for Texas's child care workers
- Support equitable quality child care
- Increasing reimbursement rates across the board and particularly for infants and toddlers.
- Provide institutional support for and recommendations for eliminating racial and gender pay disparity in the child care workforce
- Provide paid opportunities for professional development and education for childcare workers, including apprenticeships
- Support local workforce development boards to improve, sustain, and support the child care workforce
- Prioritize childcare facilities within vulnerable communities
- Increase funding to the Texas Workforce Commission to distribute to local Workforce Solutions offices for Child Care Services and actively move families off the waitlist for child care.
2 Economic Empowerment & Advancement

Women account for nearly half of Texas’ workforce, according to the Texas Comptroller. Yet, on average, full-time female workers in the state earn $10,136 less a year.

The pandemic has now forced women out of the labor force at precipitous rates. Between August and September, 865,000 women dropped out of the U.S. labor force, according to a National Women’s Law Center analysis of the Bureau of Labor Statistics compared to just 216,000 men. In Texas, as of November 2020, the top four unemployment claims industries included: temporary health services, full-service restaurants, limited-service restaurants, elementary and secondary schools.

Since February, the number of Hispanic women in the U.S. labor force has fallen nearly 7 percent, the number of Black women declined 5.6%, and the number of white women by nearly 3%. Post-pandemic economic advancement for women and women of color in Texas will be critical in ensuring economic success for all Texans.

We support economic advancement policies for all women that will:

- Expand or create family-friendly leave and work policies
- Expand workforce development training programs prioritizing women of color
- Create college pipelines and apprenticeship programs to reduce wage gaps, especially for fields where women are underrepresented
- Promote equal pay for women
- Increase women’s financial access via entrepreneurship programs and opportunities in non-traditional careers
Racial Justice

Over the last several years, the nation has reckoned with a reality of injustice and systemic racism in our state and across the country.

For the upcoming legislative session, the Texas Legislature must take action on the following racial justice issues: Criminal Justice Reform, Addressing Health Inequities, Ensuring Just Treatment of Immigrants, and Expanding Voter Access.

We support legislation that will offer equity in our institutional systems that:

- Provides funding and support for an evidence-based inquiry or formation of a statewide committee to reduce health, gender and racial disparities
- Provides actionable measures to reduce the maternal mortality rate disparity
- Increases training for enforcement agencies to identify and interact with adolescents with mental health diagnosis and/or special needs
- Supports those who have experienced trauma with improved access to community resources for survivors, including in the education and juvenile justice systems.
- Reduces the burden on police departments through increased funding to support officers with trained mental health professionals and trauma-informed best practice education
- Increases accountability and transparency through independent investigation, training, and data collection processes adopted statewide
- Eliminates policies and practices of racial profiling
- Protects immigrant women, children and their families at our Texas border from abuse and exploitation as they wait for their claims to be processed and considered
- Expands voter access through automatic voter registration and vote by mail
- Protects counties and local control over voter registration activities

For questions, please contact Coda Rayo-Garza at crayo-garza@ywcosa.org