

**FOR RELEASE
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SENATE BILL 299 INTRODUCED TODAY

EQUAL RIGHTS ADVOCATES SPONSORS CRUCIAL BILL ENSURING CONTINUED HEALTH INSURANCE FOR PREGNANT WORKERS

Sacramento, CA: Equal Rights Advocates (ERA) announces its co-sponsorship of Senate Bill 299, introduced today by Senator Noreen Evans, Chair of the Legislative Women's Caucus. This legislation will ensure that employer-provided health insurance coverage is continued for women on pregnancy disability leave.

Senate Bill 299 will amend California's Pregnancy Disability Leave Act ("PDL") to guarantee the continuation of employer-provided health insurance coverage for women on pregnancy disability leave. Unlike other California and federal leave laws that ensure health insurance coverage during leave for some employees, continued health care coverage is not required by the PDL currently. This gap in health care coverage under the PDL discourages and prevents women who are not covered by other leave laws from taking pregnancy leave despite their health needs and the needs of their baby. Forced to pay out-of-pocket costs for health coverage, many women will delay or cut short their leave despite well-documented benefits to mother and child.

Noreen Farrell, Managing Attorney of Equal Rights Advocates, hailed the bill: "Women across the state face the horrible choice of either taking a medically necessary pregnancy leave and losing benefits or working despite health risks to ensure continued health care benefits during their pregnancy. Senate Bill 299 ensures health care coverage when pregnant workers need it most."

Continuing health care during pregnancy has wide-spread benefits. Dr. Sylvia Guendelman, noted expert in maternal and child health and Professor of Community Health and Human Development at the University of Berkeley, remarked: "Effective prenatal care can help reduce societal and individual burdens to mothers and infants. Working women who are able to get coverage for prenatal care are more likely to take maternity leave, which has been shown to have positive effects on mothers and infants, as well as employee retention and loyalty."

ERA is co-sponsoring Senate Bill 299 with the California Commission on the Status of Women. ERA, founded in 1974, is a national civil rights organization dedicated to protecting and expanding economic and educational access and opportunities for girls, women, and working families. For more information, please see equalrights.org.