

# A Stronger California:

*Securing Economic Opportunity  
for All Women and Families*

**2023 Legislative Agenda**

**Stronger California Advocates Network**

**A Stronger  
California**

SECURING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY  
FOR WOMEN & FAMILIES

## About the Stronger California Agenda:

California is home to millions of families who rely on common sense public policies helping them build assets, succeed in equitable and safe workplaces, and access affordable and quality care for their children and other family members. That is why advocates, legislators, and community members throughout the state stand together in support of the Stronger California Agenda.

The Stronger California Agenda has five pillars that frame the policy initiatives critical to the economic security of women and families in this state. It recognizes that women are critical to a strong and vibrant California economy and play a pivotal role in spurring economic growth in California. California is home to 12 percent of the country's women, comprising almost half the workforce in our state and primary income-earners in many households. They influence the economy as decision-makers for their families, as consumers, and as workers.

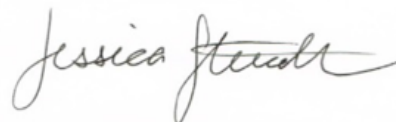
The Stronger California Agenda provides concrete policy solutions to address the fact that many women and their families in California face obstacles to enjoying economically secure lives. California has the fifth largest economy in the world, but one of the nation's highest poverty rates, disproportionately harming women and children. Sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination in the workplace continue to push women out of their jobs. Child and elder care costs are prohibitively high and insufficient affordable options limit opportunities for working parents. Women are paid less than their male counterparts for the same work in virtually every job sector. They are also more likely to work in low-wage jobs and often lack family-friendly work policies necessary to make a living while also caring for their families. These challenges were magnified and exacerbated by the pandemic and resulting economic crisis and policies that address the myriad barriers to economic security for women and families are more important than ever.

This Agenda is not just about women. It promotes policies that will improve the economic security of all Californians. Thank you for standing with the Stronger California Advocates Network in supporting this Agenda. A list of partners in the Stronger California Advocates Network is on the back page. To learn more, please visit [StrongerCA.org](http://StrongerCA.org).

Onward,



Noreen Farrell  
Executive Director of  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Co-Chair of the  
Stronger California Advocates Network



Jessica Ramey Stender  
Policy Director of  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Co-Chair of the  
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# A Stronger California: Securing Economic Opportunity for All Women & Families

## The 2023 Stronger California Advocates Network Agenda

### Fair Pay, Job Opportunities, & Workplace Justice

- **SB 476 – Worker Freedom from Funding Corporate Lobbying Act (Introduced by Senator Limón)**

Assembly Bill 476 modifies existing law to prevent employers from using worker money to fund corporate lobbying efforts aimed at suppressing workers' wages. This bill will require employers to pay for the worker's time and the fees associated with taking the training course required to obtain the mandatory food handler card within 30 days of their date of hire. The bill would also prohibit an employer from conditioning employment on the applicant or employee having an existing food handler card.

- **SB 497 – Equal Pay and Anti-Retaliation Act (Introduced by Senator Smallwood-Cuevas)**

Senate Bill 497 strengthens retaliation protections for California workers by creating a rebuttable presumption that a negative action against an employee is retaliatory if it occurs within 90 days of reporting a labor or equal pay violation. This bill will also allow whistleblowers who experience retaliation to collect a penalty of up to \$10,000 that lawbreaking employers now pay to the State.

- **AB 933 – Protecting Survivors from Weaponized Defamation Lawsuits (Introduced by Assemblymembers Aguiar-Curry and Ward)**

AB 933 will expand protections against retaliatory defamation lawsuits for survivors of sexual assault, harassment, or discrimination who speak out about their own experience. In doing so, the bill would make it harder for perpetrators to retaliate against survivors with legal threats and intimidation. This bill will also provide relief to survivors in the form of reasonable attorneys' fees and damages for successfully defending themselves against meritless defamation lawsuits.

- **SB 686 – Health and Safety for all Workers Act (Introduced by Senator Durazo)**

SB 686 would eliminate the exclusion of privately paid "household domestic service" employees from California's Occupational Safety and Health Act (Cal/OSHA). The historic exclusion of domestic workers—predominantly low-paid women of color—from worker protection laws is rooted in sexism and racism and leaves domestic workers vulnerable to abuse and dangerous working conditions. SB 686 will ensure adequate health and safety protections for these workers and will support domestic service employers to be able to provide healthy and safe conditions by establishing a financial and technical assistance program.

- **AB 1356 – Protect Laid-Off Workers Act (Introduced by Assemblymember Haney)**

The Protect Laid Off Workers Act would expand California’s layoff protection law, the WARN Act, to strengthen economic security for Californians and meet the needs of workers today. It will extend the requirement to give notice of a layoff from 60 to 90 days, ensuring that no workers’ safety net is tied up in severance negotiations, and include contract workers in these critical protections.

## **Expand Access to Affordable, Quality Early Childhood Care and Education**

- **AB 596 (Gómez Reyes) and SB 380 (Limón): Increasing Access to Stable, Affordable, Quality Early Childhood Care & Education**

AB 596 and SB 380 will help childcare providers and families by transitioning providers to a single cost-based reimbursement rate, suspending family fees until an equitable sliding scale for family fees is established. It will require the California Department of Social Services to apply to the federal Health and Human Services Agency to amend the State’s current Child Care and Development Fund State Plan to change reimbursement rates to an alternative methodology to include a cost-based model consistent with government recommendations.

## **Support Family-Friendly Workplaces**

- **AB 518 – Paid Family Leave for Chosen Family (Introduced by Assemblymember Wicks)**

AB 518 will update the definition of “family member” for purposes of California's Paid Family Leave (PFL) program to allow workers to receive PFL benefits when caring for “an individual related by blood or whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship.” This builds on AB 1041, enacted in 2023, giving workers the right to take paid sick days or job-protected family medical leave under the California Family Rights Act to care for chosen and extended family members

- **AB 524 – Family Caregiver Anti-Discrimination Act (Introduced by Assemblymember Wicks)**

AB 524 will prohibit discrimination against employees based on their status as a family caregiver. In other words, an employer may not treat a worker adversely based on assumptions or stereotypes associated with their family caregiving responsibilities.

- **AB 575 – Paid Family Leave Improvements (Introduced by Assemblymember Papan)**

AB 575 would address three major barriers to California's Paid Family Leave (PFL) program to increase California workers' ability to access the program in times of need. AB 575 would remove the provision preventing more than one caregiver from receiving PFL to care for the same family member at the same time. A seriously ill person may need care from more than one family member. In addition, the bill would make PFL available for child bonding when a guardian newly assumes responsibility for a child "in loco parentis." Finally, it would remove the provision of PFL allowing employers to require employees to use 2 weeks of accrued vacation before they can receive PFL benefits. Most California workers contribute to Paid Family Leave and should be able to access it when they need it.

- **SB 616 – Paid Sick + Safe Days (Introduced by Senator Gonzalez)**

Senate Bill 616 will build on existing California law, which requires employers to provide their employees with only three paid sick days per year. This bill better supports workers' health and economic security by providing employees the right to take seven paid sick days per year and improving carryover provisions and accrual thresholds.

## **Combating Poverty & Building Assets**

- **AB 1128 – Young Child Tax Credit (YCTC) Expansion (Introduced by Assemblymember Santiago)**

AB 1128 will combat poverty by expanding household eligibility for the Young Child Tax Credit (YCTC) to match eligibility requirements for the California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC). This bill would expand YCTC eligibility to include: children ages 6-18, children ages 19-23 who are students, and children of any age with permanent and total disabilities.

- **AB 310 – Reimagining CalWORKS (Introduced by Assemblymember Arambula)**

AB 310 will reimagine the CalWORKs (California Work, Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids) program by providing all parents with the critical support they need to ensure economic security for their children and themselves. AB 310 undoes historical harms of the CalWORKs program rooted in racist and sexist federal and state law and establishes program changes that recognizes where our state's diverse population is now, and the necessary steps needed to help CalWORKs families thrive.

- **AB 1498 – Expand CalEITC Minimum to \$300 (Introduced by Assemblymember Gipson)**

AB 1498 will establish a California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC) minimum amount of at least \$300 for low-wage earners. A minimum credit of at least \$300 would provide a more meaningful credit to families, helping families and individuals better afford the high cost of living in California, while driving several interrelated benefits to strengthen the CalEITC. This amount also reflects increased inflation and ensures that we increase the CalEITC for the greatest number of Californians to a robust amount.

- **SB 227 – The Safety Net for All Workers Act (Introduced by Senator Durazo)**

SB 227 and our corresponding budget request will ensure that over one million workers do not fall into financial ruin when they lose their job, by providing unemployment benefits to Californians who are excluded from regular unemployment insurance solely due to their immigration status. Specifically, SB 227 will create a state Excluded Workers Program, modeled off of successful programs in other states, to provide eligible workers with \$300 per week for up to 20 weeks. California employers pay an estimated \$485 million annually in Unemployment Insurance taxes on behalf of undocumented workers, even though those workers do not see a cent of that money. By creating an Excluded Workers Program, SB 227 will ensure that California’s families, communities, and industries are better able to withstand economic and environmental crises, and build a more equitable and resilient economy for everyone.

- **AB 1082 – Ending Poverty Tows (Introduced by Assemblymember Kalra)**

AB 1082 would prohibit “poverty tows,” where a vehicle is towed as a debt collection mechanism due to unpaid parking tickets. Every year in California, tens of thousands of drivers get their cars towed because they can’t afford to pay their parking tickets. For low income and working households, the towing of a vehicle is often catastrophic. For many, a tow means total loss of their car because the tow and ticket fees are more than they can afford - and often more than what their car is worth. When people lose their cars they often lose their biggest personal asset, their ability to get to work, and their ability to meet their basic needs like grocery shopping, taking children to school, or going to medical appointments. AB 1082 will prohibit towing or immobilizing a vehicle due to unpaid parking tickets, increase the number of unpaid tickets before the DMV can place a registration hold, and improve the guidelines for parking ticket payment programs. These changes together will help cities actually collect unpaid ticket fees and help working families continue to drive to work, pay their rent and bills, and provide for their families.

- **SB 521 – CalWORKs: Pregnancy or Parenting (Introduced by Senator Smallwood-Cuevas):**

This bill will help pregnant, lactating, and parenting students in high school and college maintain their CalWORKs benefits. The bill exempts CalWORKs recipients at college campuses from Welfare-to-Work requirements if they fail to meet their academic progress or hours requirement due to lack of accommodations for pregnant, parenting, and/or lactating reasons in violation of Title IX. Currently, if a recipient is not accommodated for pregnancy, parenting, or lactation needs at their academic institution, they have no recourse and may lose their CalWORKs benefits through sanctions, even though the accommodations needed are required under Title IX. The bill also eliminates sanctions for CalLEARN recipients and expands the list of exemptions from participation for teens who experience family destabilizing events such as homelessness, domestic violence, or mental health crises.

## Health and Reproductive Rights

- **AB 793 – Stop Surveilling Our Bodies Act (Introduced by Assemblymember Bonta)**

The digital trail we make by carrying a smartphone, using social media, or apps that track our location reveals a lot about us and must be safeguarded. “Reverse demands” —also called “geofence demands” or “keyword demands”—are a form of unconstitutional digital surveillance that pose a grave risk in a Post-Roe America. Reverse demands can compel companies to search

their records for the identities of all people who looked up a particular keyword online or drove down a certain street. Rather than help police find a needle in a haystack, they hand over the haystack whether the needle is there or not. California must be a true refuge for people seeking or providing abortions or gender-affirming care. AB 793 will put a stop to unconstitutional reverse demands – preserving our digital privacy and protecting Californians’ right to live life on our own terms.

- **AB 583 – Invest in Efforts to Improve Health Care for Pregnant and Birthing People (Introduced by Assemblymember Wicks)**

This bill establishes a three-year pilot program to provide grants to community-based doula groups, community-based organizations to provide full spectrum doula care to (1) women and birthing people whose communities suffer from disproportionately high rates of negative birth outcomes, but who are not eligible for Medi-Cal coverage; and (2) incarcerated women and birthing people. Funding from the grants would be used to pay for costs associated with provision of full-spectrum doula care; building a culturally congruent doula pipeline; and establishing, managing, or expanding doula services. This bill aims to address adverse maternal and infant health outcomes by expanding maternal health care to birthing people who experience disproportionately high negative birth outcomes and recognizes that all birthing people deserve dignity in birthing, including incarcerated people.

- **SB 59 – Equity, Period (Introduced by Senator Skinner)**

This bill will ensure equitable access to period products across California by requiring free period products in state owned or leased buildings, buildings where a state funded safety net program is administered, and hospitals that receive state funding.

## The Stronger California Advocates Network

The Stronger California Advocates Network is a historic collaboration of organizations and advocate coalitions with deep experience working with communities affected by the four pillars of the Stronger California Agenda. The Network capitalizes on the strengths of our members to advance the economic security of women and families in California.

### Network Roundtable Members

Equal Rights Advocates, Network Chair  
9 to 5  
ACLU of California  
Act for Women and Girls  
Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment  
American Association of University Women  
California Asset Building Coalition  
California Child Care Resource & Referral Network  
California Domestic Workers Coalition  
California Employment Lawyers Association  
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice  
California Partnership  
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence  
California Women's Law Center  
California Work and Family Coalition  
Caring Across Generations  
Center for Popular Democracy  
Child Care Law Center  
Child Care Resource Center  
Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice  
First 5 California  
Legal Aid at Work  
Lutheran Office of Public Policy  
Mujeres Unidas y Activas  
NARAL Pro-Choice California  
National Council of Jewish Women - California  
Organization United for Respect  
Parent Voices CA  
Raising California Together  
Restaurant Opportunities Centers (ROC) United  
Tradeswomen, Inc.  
UFCW Western States Council  
Voices for Progress  
Western Center on Law and Poverty  
Women's Foundation California  
Work Equity  
YWCA San Francisco & Marin

### Network Supporters

Asset Building Strategies  
Bet Tzedek  
Business and Professional Women of Colorado  
California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls  
California Immigrant Policy Center  
California Women Lawyers  
Center for Responsible Lending  
Centro Legal de la Raza  
ChangeLab Solutions  
Closing the Women's Wealth Gap Initiative  
Coalition of Labor Union Women – CA Capitol Chapter  
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto  
Consumer Attorneys of California  
County of Santa Clara Office of Women's Policy  
Courage California  
Equal Justice Society  
Feminist Majority  
FreeFrom  
Friends Committee on Legislation of California  
The Garment Worker Center  
Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network  
Insight Center for Community Economic Development  
It's Time Network  
Justice in Aging  
National Housing Law Project  
National Women's Political Caucus California  
National Women's Political Caucus, LA Metro  
Public Counsel  
The Public Interest Law Project  
UltraViolet  
United Nations Association of Boulder County  
Women Lawyers of Sacramento  
Women's March Oakland