

Helping Chicago Create Family-Friendly Policies



Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel is convening a Working Families Task Force to make recommendations on workplace policies like sick time, family leave, and fair scheduling, that support working families. Because of our long-standing expertise on those issues, WE's Executive Director Anne Ladky was invited to co-chair the task force.

The need for action by the city is urgent. Right now, 40 percent of private sector workers can't take a paid sick day. Fifty-nine

percent of full-time hourly workers experience scheduling fluctuations that upend their lives and make it impossible to rely on a steady paycheck. And we lag behind other developed countries in providing paid family leave.

Alderman Ameya Pawar of the 47th Ward, a strong supporter of earned sick time, is the group's other co-chair. The 25-member group includes advocates, aldermen, business owners and executives, state legislators, labor leaders, and employer associations.

"We're very pleased that the Mayor has convened this group," said Ladky. "It's an important opportunity to make a positive impact for Chicago's working families. Wherever possible, we want to find win-win solutions for employees and businesses. What we'll be discussing is especially important to low-paid women, who lack even basic benefits like sick time. If we can improve workplace policies in the city, tens of thousands of women and their families will have a much greater chance for a more stable and successful economic future."

As part of the process, the Working Families Task Force will seek input from the public. We'll want to hear from you. Stay tuned!

Receive timely emails with easy actions you can take about these and other policies that will make life better for working women:
womenemployed.org/join-we-action-network



Not Sitting on the Sidelines: A Chat with Abigail

As a program manager at the Ounce of Prevention Fund, **Abigail Sylvester** spends her days fighting to ensure that children have access to early childhood education. And in her free time, Abigail volunteers on the leadership committee of WE's Advocacy Council, a group of young women who friendraise, fundraise, and advocate for policies that benefit working women.

This year, she became a monthly donor and introduced two new advocates to Women Employed at *The Working Lunch*.

Abigail, tell us why you got involved with Women Employed.

I wanted to meet like-minded women who are passionate about helping to improve the lives of all women. I wanted to be part of something bigger than just me and help create change and take action. I couldn't sit on the sidelines.

What was your favorite thing about *The Working Lunch* this year?

It's inspiring being in a room with hundreds of Chicagoans who also care about and want to address the challenges facing low-wage working women. The luncheon is a reminder that there is a critical mass of people demanding change.

What changes do you hope to see for women in the next five years?

I plan to see a higher minimum wage, earned sick days across the board, paid parental leave, affordable higher education, accessible and affordable child care. We can do it. We must do it. We have no choice.

To learn more about the Advocacy Council, visit womenemployed.org/volunteer



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(Read about her inside.)

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OPENING DOORS, BREAKING BARRIERS, AND CREATING FAIRER WORKPLACES FOR WOMEN SINCE 1973

Hard Earned Series Highlights the Struggle of Low-Paid Workers



Imagine what it would mean to have your paycheck depend on how somebody felt about you that day. Or to face losing your home because, between two jobs, you only bring home \$300 most weeks. Or to carry so much student loan debt that, even though you and your partner both have decent jobs, you can't afford even a modest place of your own.

That's the reality of the workers profiled in the new documentary series *Hard Earned*, produced by Kartemquin Films for Al Jazeera America. The six-part series profiles the lives of five American families who are struggling to get by on low-paying jobs.

Women Employed served as an advisor on the project, helping filmmakers to understand the reality of low-wage work in America. And this spring, WE hosted a screening of the first episode followed by a discussion with filmmakers and workers profiled in the series.

“Being part of this film opened my eyes. Before, I didn't see the people struggling around me because I was focusing on my own struggle. Sometimes when you think you're alone, the world caves in around you and you get smaller and smaller. This helped me to get bigger. There are millions of people like me who are struggling, and this helped me to connect to them.”

–**Emilia, worker profiled in *Hard Earned***

“We feel incredibly grateful that these families were all willing to allow us into their lives in very personal ways—when they were getting up in the morning, when they were going to bed at night. We got to see their lives, and because of that, we ended up with something very powerful.”

– **Maggie Bowman, filmmaker from Kartemquin**

For more information on the series and where you can watch it, visit hardearnedseries.com.