

SMASHING



THE STATUS QUO

WAGE GAP

GENDER
DISCRIMINATION

STUDENT DEBT

INEQUALITY

FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Dear Friends,

Women Employed (WE) has always made it our business to crash ceilings and break down the barriers that keep working women from obtaining economic security. And as we head into our 50th anniversary, we have a lot to be proud of. **Since 1973**, WE has effected change for millions of women, to ensure jobs provide dignity, safety, opportunity, and fair pay, and that women can access the education and training they need to pursue better careers that allow them to support themselves and their families.

And there's still so much to do. The last two and a half years have provided an unparalleled window into the inequities and barriers women—especially those in low-or unpaid work, and Black and/or Latina/x women—face in the workplace and in achieving equity. It has also afforded the chance to drive change to the systems, structures, and practices perpetuating these inequities. We are motivated to keep leveraging every opportunity to drive change.

So, we continue to smash the status quo (not just in the workplace, but right here at WE as well) and build new pathways to success for women—whether that means **advocating** for better laws and policies, providing **thought leadership** on the path forward, engaging in **public education** to make sure we all know our rights and are empowered to demand they are respected, or build **programs** that help more women succeed.

In this report, you'll read about some of the exciting work we're doing to smash the status quo, and hear from women who are informing and benefitting from that work. You'll see the progress we've made on our strategic plan, as we work to radically **SHIFT** the distribution of resources; **FORGE** pathways to economic security, leadership, and wealth; and **ENSURE** the appropriate recognition and compensation of the essential work done by women.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. WE could not do this transformational work without your support.



Lynn Watkins-Asiyanbi

LYNN WATKINS-ASIYANBI,
Board Chair



Cherita Ellens

CHERITA ELLENS,
President and CEO

Impact Report 2022

To build a better future where **working women** and **their families** can not just **survive—but thrive—we need to smash the status quo.** That means reshaping the workplace, and **rethinking how Women Employed approaches our work, too.**

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IMPACT AT A GLANCE

ADVOCACY



We collected **300 witness slips** in support of a bill to create a paid family and medical leave program in Illinois, reflecting overwhelming popular support on our journey to ensuring all working people have time to care.



We won a historic **\$122 million increase in funding for the Monetary Award Program (MAP)**, which provides need-based grants to help low-income Illinois students afford college and certificate programs.



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP



WE experts were interviewed for more than 40 news stories, in outlets like ABC-7, NBC 5, CBS-2, the Washington Post, The Chicago Sun-Times, the Chicago Tribune, the Chicago Defender, MSNBC, Politico Illinois Playbook, the Atlanta Journal Constitution, WTTW, WBEZ, WBBM, the State Journal Register, and more!



Representatives from WE are **members of high-level commissions and task forces**, including the City of Chicago's Advisory Group for the Chicago Resilient Communities Fund, the Illinois Governor's Commission on Workforce Access and Equity, The Illinois Board of Higher Education Commission on Equitable Public University Funding, the Mayor's Women's Advisory Council, and more!



WE conducted and published **new, first-of-its-kind research on the economic barriers facing Chicagoland survivors of domestic violence**, including recommendations to address them.



PUBLIC EDUCATION



The Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL) chose Women Employed as a lead partner on the FARE Grant, a \$350,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau to **educate women in Illinois about their pay equity and pay transparency rights**.

PROGRAMS



Our ASPIRE Project **provided technical assistance, support, and guidance to 10 community colleges** across Illinois on their plans to reform developmental education to increase equity and access.

10
community
colleges



WE laid the groundwork to launch 2 new programs: a Women's Entrepreneurship Hub (WE Hub) to remove barriers to business ownership for Black and/or Latina/x women in Illinois, and WE Consulting to help more employers foster an inclusive culture of equity at the intersection of gender and race.

SHIFT

Women cannot achieve economic parity without building wealth. But financial resources are not distributed equitably. Women are more likely to live in poverty, hold more debt, and have a harder time securing loans and capital. Those barriers are compounded for Black and Latina/x women, who own just nine cents for every dollar owned by white men. To close that chasm, WE are **shifting** our own status quo and championing fresh solutions to resource distribution—like removing barriers to entrepreneurship and seeking new ways to reduce debt and build income.

Many women are seeking alternative paths to economic empowerment or complements to the traditional workplace. Many rely on side hustles to supplement their income, escape toxic workplaces, and gain the freedom entrepreneurship provides. Black women are the fastest-growing group of entrepreneurs, with Latina/x women close behind, and 54 percent of women with side hustles report adding over \$500/month to their income.

But for most, the journey towards entrepreneurship is not linear and can be difficult to navigate. Especially for Black and Latina/x women who often lack access to capital, encounter systemic barriers, and struggle to piece together resources and find answers to their toughest questions.

Like many women, my path to entrepreneurship was far from a straight line. I didn't have any formal education in web development and started making websites as a teenager to bond with my dad. Throughout my early adulthood—whether I was getting my degree, working in advertising, tending bars—web design was always something I did on the side.

I was good at web design—great even—but entrepreneurship wasn't for people like me. Systemic inequality and a lack of representation erected a barrier in my imagination so I couldn't even see the vision of "Chris Mickens: Business Owner." Had it not been for my partner encouraging me, I would still be making websites on the side and grossly undercharging for my services.

— **Chris Mickens**,
Owner and Creative Technical
Director, EDUCO

PROGRAMS

This year we laid the groundwork for an **innovative approach to empowering Black and Latina/x women to find the resources they need to start and grow businesses**. Our Women's Entrepreneurship Hub (WE Hub)—launching by the time you read this—gathers resources from trusted partners throughout Illinois into one central place. We provide personalized tasks and toolkits and access to a community, guiding women to achieve their vision of success.

Check it out at wehub.org!



We helped win an expanded and increased **Earned Income Credit (EIC) in Illinois**, providing relief for nearly one million Illinoisans excluded from federal tax credits, and increasing the EIC from an 18 percent to a 20 percent match of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

The Mayor's office invited WE to join the Chicago Resilient Communities Advisory Group, **advising the City on a groundbreaking pilot program to provide \$500 in monthly assistance to 5,000 Chicago residents** who are 18 or older, have experienced COVID-related economic hardship, and have a household income at or below 250 percent of the Federal Poverty Line.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Women carry two-thirds of our nation's \$1.7 trillion in student debt. So, when the Biden Administration announced a temporary expansion of the Public Student Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program, we wanted everyone to know. **WE hosted a webinar with the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), sharing information about PSLF**, who qualifies, and how to apply.

ADVOCACY

Reducing tuition costs will allow even more students—especially low-income and Black and Latina/x women—to access education without incurring debt. **This year, we won an additional \$122 million for Illinois' need-based Monetary Award Program (MAP), increasing the average grant by 30 percent and serving 15,000 new students.**



FORGE

It's a stubborn reality that, more often than not, low-paid work is women's work. Women are concentrated in jobs that provide little pay and few opportunities to advance. Nearly two-thirds of low-paid workers are women, and Latina/x and Black women are particularly over-represented. To empower more of us to succeed, we must smash the status quo holding women back, open doors to new opportunities, and **forge** pathways to economic security, leadership, and wealth.



Nationally, 3.8 million college students are raising kids, and 70 percent of them are mothers. They are working hard to forge new opportunities for themselves and their children. But the demands of raising kids while in school, while often working full-time to pay tuition and support their families, can derail their dreams. Reliable child care is a gamechanger. But the few available child care supports for student parents are underutilized because many students simply don't know they exist.

I have 3 children and a 4th on the way. As a college student, I've never received any information on child care resources. My school sent a survey last year asking whether I could utilize child care services, but there was no info on reimbursement or compensation. I filled it out, but nothing came of it.

Daycare is a big deal. I struggled with it last year. I'm an honors student, and most of my classes are virtual, but I sometimes have to be in person. For my college to do the research and give me information on child care would give me peace of mind, and let me know being a parent isn't a disadvantage and won't be counted against me.

— Taylor Bradley,
college student and former WE intern

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

With support from the Michael Reese Health Trust, WE is leading a project to **improve how domestic violence survivors are connected with services that attach them to meaningful employment and build economic independence.** We conducted original research, filling a knowledge gap on the economic barriers facing Chicagoland survivors. Our report, *Intersecting Barriers*, provides recommendations to address those barriers and support promising practices.

WE worked with the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) to develop an Ability to Benefit process for Illinois, **providing more students to access financial aid to pursue career and technical training, as well as sector-based bridge programs.** The process was approved by the U.S. Department of Education, allowing more Illinoisans to forge brighter futures.

Career Pathways are a proven strategy, championed by WE, to help non-traditional students forge pathways to success. This year, WE—with our community-based partners and City Colleges of Chicago—brought Career Foundations to over 600 adult learners. We also brought multiple organizations and resources together to ensure more Health Care Bridge Program participants earn credentials that lead to careers with living wages.



Graduates from the Health Care Careers Program at Erie Neighborhood House.

PROGRAMS

WE is improving developmental education to increase equity, access to, and success in higher education. Through our **Accelerating Student Progress and Increasing Racial Equity (ASPIRE) Project**, we partnered with 10 community colleges throughout Illinois to develop and test innovative strategies to determine college readiness, place more students directly into college, and support their academic progress.



WE's Christina Green (2nd from right) joins partners from the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), and Partnership for College Completion (PCC) at Strong Start to Finish's Developmental Education Policy Academy.

ADVOCACY

This year, **we won a law in Illinois to ensure more student parents will know about child care resources** so they can stay in school and earn their degrees. The law requires the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) and higher ed institutions to provide information about state and federal child care resources; and encourages them to post information on their websites as well.

ENSURE

Women deserve to work in environments free from harassment, where they are paid fairly, where they can take time off to care for themselves and their families, and where they have basic workplace protections and supports. To **ensure** women—and especially Black and/or Latina/x women who face greater barriers—are fully supported and fairly compensated, we are championing more equitable workplaces where women are not only economically secure but can thrive.

Tipped workers earn a wage of just 60 percent of the current minimum wage, are more likely to be injured on the job, often lack benefits like paid sick time and paid leave, and are susceptible to sexual harassment. These risks are often greater for women, People of Color, and members of the LGBTQ+ community.



“I only provide for myself, but it’s hard. I don’t make minimum wage and for what I do make, ends don’t meet. I have been promised a raise, but I still have not received it. And because I am currently out with an injury, I am unable to train on the various stations so that I can move on, and I feel stuck. On top of me only receiving 50 percent of my pay since I am currently out of work.

At a previous kitchen, I was sexually harassed by one of my coworkers. When I complained to management, I was told to brush it off or ignore it. Because of the restaurant’s hours, he and I were forced to work together. The sexual harassment only stopped because I became aggressive with him and physically stood up for myself when he tried to corner me.

However, I am determined to stay motivated. I have dreams of becoming a chef and running my own kitchen and that’s why advocacy groups like Women Employed are important because we need a voice. We need equal pay and equal rights for women and queer people. I’ve been in kitchens where I made less just because I was a woman. So, we need someone else to hear our stories and advocate on our behalf, because when we tell our managers, nothing happens. We’re not getting anywhere.”

– **Cynthia Vega**,
restaurant worker

ADVOCACY

For many, taking time off to care for themselves or a loved one means losing a paycheck. That’s why **WE is leading two statewide coalitions to advocate for paid sick days and paid family and medical leave** in Illinois. We’re following our victories in Chicago and Cook County and backing a bill to ensure that all working people across Illinois have paid sick days; and another to provide partial wage replacement for family and medical leave that ensures the lowest-paid workers can afford to take paid leave.

WE are advocating to ensure more equitable working conditions for those who work in tipped professions—starting with the elimination of the subminimum wage so all working people can earn a full and fair wage with tips on top. Illinois tipped workers earn a subminimum wage of just \$7.20 an hour, disproportionately impacting women and People of Color who are more likely to work in tipped industries. To combat this, **we launched the Full and Fair Wage Coalition** with One Fair Wage and other partners to ensure equitable pay for everyone.



WE’s Senior Coalition Manager, Starr De Los Santos, speaks at a Full and Fair Wage Coalition rally.

Sexual harassment remains a persistent workplace barrier, but we’re finding new ways to combat it at all levels. This year, we worked with the **Chicago** Mayor’s office to win a sexual harassment prevention ordinance requiring employers to provide additional training and increasing protections for working people, and we’re helping the City develop the mandatory resources and trainings.

◆ Following an amicus brief WE co-led with the National Women’s Law Center, ACLU, and DLA Piper LLC, the **Illinois** Supreme Court reversed a troubling decision and affirmed the importance of protection against retaliatory defamation lawsuits for those who report and participate in investigating sexual harassment and other discrimination! ◆ We also joined partners across the country to advocate for a **federal** law banning forced arbitration for survivors of sexual harassment, and were present at the White House to witness the bill being signed into law.



WE’s Cherita Ellens (left) with Vice President Kamala Harris at the White House for the signing of a bill ending forced arbitration for sexual harassment.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Domestic workers need basic job rights and protections. And as of January 1, 2022, the City of Chicago guarantees them the right to a written contract—one of the first such protections in the country. To ensure domestic workers and their employers know these rights, we **created a resource page** on our website with sample contracts, checklists, and fact sheets in English, Spanish, and Polish.

Women deserve fair wages! For every dollar a man is paid in the U.S., women who work full-time only receive an average of **83 cents**. The pay gap is even wider for Women of Color and women in low-paid jobs. But thanks to a **collaboration with IDOL on the FARE Grant project**, WE are raising awareness of Illinois workers’ rights to pay equity and pay transparency.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

As part of the Mayor’s Women’s Advisory Council, WE worked with the City of Chicago, the Civic Consulting Alliance, and World Business Chicago **to research the impacts of COVID-19 on women in Chicago. The resulting report released by the City, Creating a More Equitable Recovery**, reveals how the pandemic has exacerbated economic barriers for Black and Latina/x women in particular; and includes recommendations for addressing those barriers.

Thank You

We are grateful for all our corporate partners, foundation funders, and individual donors who made a gift between July 1, 2021—June 30, 2022. Due to space constraints, we are not able to list all of our generous supporters. Heartfelt thanks to all of you for helping us to smash the status quo for working women.

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In Honor of Lydia Bueschel

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In Memory of Josephine Majcan Weiss

Sharon Eiseman



BUILDING A LEGACY OF IMPACT

In 1975, Janet Schumacher was on her way to work when someone handed her a leaflet about a meeting at Women Employed. “The rest,” she says, “is history.” For Janet, joining Women Employed has been “one of the best decisions ever.” From that day forward, Janet has remained a staunch advocate for working women and a generous supporter of Women Employed as an *Investor for Change*, a Table Leader for *The Working Lunch*, and a member of the Generations Circle, through a bequest in her will.

“I am personally committed to equal opportunity for ALL women. Women Employed’s work assures our future will be more equitable. I made a legacy gift because I want to ensure that Women Employed will always be there to work toward achieving economic security and better job and benefit opportunities.”

Why was joining Women Employed “one of the best decisions ever” for Janet Schumacher? “I’m inspired by the importance of working together for a common cause,” she explains. “The world of work would be a far different place if Women Employed had not been involved in seeking fairness for women. Being an advocate for equal opportunity has allowed me to work with staff and volunteers of WE, many of whom have become, and continue to be, personal friends.”

What will your legacy be? Ensure a more just future where ALL women, no matter their race or socio-economic background, have equitable access to increase their economic power. Make a legacy gift to Women Employed through your will or living trust, retirement account, or life insurance policy. When you do, we’ll welcome you as a member of WE’s legacy society, *Generations Circle*.

For more information, email Linda Ballard at lb Ballard@womenemployed.org, or call her at (312) 448-7647.

THANKS TO ALL OUR GENERATIONS CIRCLE MEMBERS

Kathleen Almaney
Nancy D. Anderson+
Shauna Babcock
Gabrielle Cummings
Vicki Curtis
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Eric Stock
Debbie Thorne and
Jerry Esrig
Elizabeth Turley
Lynn Watkins-Asiyanbi

The Working Lunch

Thank you to everyone who supported *The Working Lunch* on May 17th! For the first time, our signature luncheon was a hybrid event, allowing guests to attend from the location of their choosing, as we honored Lydia Bueschel, long-time Women Employed Board Director and Shareholder at Valentine Austriaco & Bueschel, P.C., Katya Nuques, Director of the Little Village Portfolio, Robert R. McCormick Foundation, and keynote speaker, Dr. Ngozi Ezike, former Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health.



INVESTORS FOR CHANGE

With the generosity of our *Investors for Change*, who make unrestricted gifts of \$1,000 or more annually, Women Employed is able to pursue the best opportunities to improve workplace conditions and build pathways to higher education so more women can succeed economically.

ANNE LADKY LEADERSHIP FUND ♦

Thank you to these donors who founded the fund in Anne’s honor and to those who have designated the total or a portion of their gift to the fund. All donations support initiatives aimed at increasing WE’s impact on the conditions facing women in low-paid occupations and building our movement by engaging next-generation leaders as activists for women’s economic justice.

NANCY B. KREITER ADVOCACY FUND*

Special thanks to the donors of this fund that supports Women Employed’s work to strengthen federal equal opportunity policies.

GENERATIONS CIRCLE

Thanks to our supporters who have included Women Employed in their estate plans, future generations of women will have meaningful opportunities to achieve their aspirations for themselves and their families.

ELEVATE, OUR MONTHLY GIVING ☆

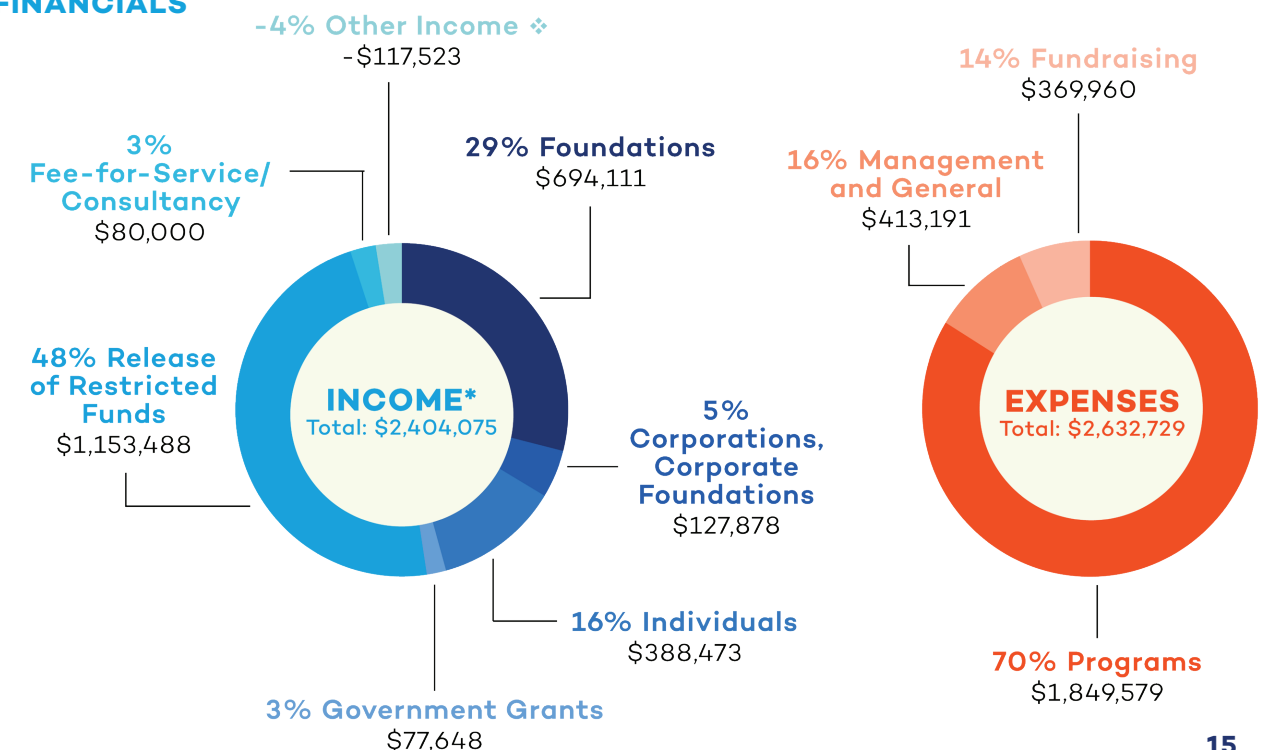
Elevate is a passionate and determined group of monthly supporters on a mission to improve the economic status of women and remove barriers to equity. Make a monthly gift and join people just like you, giving anything they can to prove how unstoppable we are when we work together!

DEDICATIONS

Honor a loved one with a gift in their name to Women Employed for a birthday, anniversary, or other special occasion. Donations in memory of a special person honor their life and continue their legacy. The tribute gifts noted are donations of \$150 and above.

For more information on these special giving opportunities, call Linda Ballard at (312) 448-7647 or visit womenemployed.org

FINANCIALS



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