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**WOMEN'S CAUCUS ANNOUNCES PRIORITY LEGISLATION AND BUDGET ACTION
TO FIX OUTDATED INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORTING CALIFORNIA'S WOMEN,
WORKFORCE AND ECONOMY #StrongerCA**

SACRAMENTO – Last year, the Democratic members of the California Legislative Women's Caucus helped advance the nation's strongest equal pay law for women, positioning California as a leader in the fight to improve the economic lives of women and families.

This year, the Democratic women members are back with a package of policy and budget priorities to further advance the lives of women and their families, the structures that support the California workforce and the economic future of the state.

"A Stronger California: Securing Economic Opportunity for all Women," includes priorities centered around four pillars: Equal pay and job opportunities, access to childcare, family-friendly workplaces and building economic security by addressing poverty. They include a budget ask for an additional \$800 million investment in the state's early care and education programs as well as legislation to further address pay inequities (AB 1676, Campos), guarantee three months of job-protected maternity and paternity leave for nearly all Californians (Jackson), ensure reliable scheduling for California workers (SB 878, Leyva) and repeal the CalWORKs Maximum Family Grant (SB 23, Mitchell).

Women's economic roles in California and across the country continue to change. Women comprise almost half of California's workforce today, and families depend on women's income more than ever before. In the United States, it is estimated that 70 percent of mothers work and more than 40 percent of mothers are the sole or primary breadwinners for their families, earning at least half of their family's income.

Gender inequality directly affects the pocket books of California women and families. California women lose \$39 billion in income every year due to unequal pay. Single mothers spend 44% of their income on childcare, even as California has cut state childcare programs to the bone. In addition, two-thirds of low-wage earners are women.

“Women’s roles have changed, yet the structures that support our workforce have not caught up to a reality where women work out of necessity and their incomes are critical to their families and our economy,” said Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson (D-Santa Barbara), chair of the California Legislative Women’s Caucus. “California made great strides last year to close the wage gap women face at work with the passage of the California Fair Pay Act, but a giant chasm still exists between the structures and public programs that support our changing workforce and the reality of Californian’s daily lives.”

“In a year when there is much talk in California about fixing our roads, highways and buildings, we also need to prioritize fixing the outdated structures that support our changing workforce, especially our childcare system,” said Assemblymember Cristina Garcia (D-Bell Gardens), vice chair of the California Legislative Women’s Caucus. “Our policies and our budget should reflect our state’s values and the needs of our economy, and it’s critical that women and the issues that affect them receive more attention. “

“The Legislative Women’s Caucus is pursuing several important steps on behalf of economic equity for California women,” said Assembly Speaker Toni G. Atkins. “Studies show families are depending on women’s income now more than ever, with a woman as breadwinner or co-breadwinner in 40% of American families. With so many women breadwinners providing for their families, the time is long past when they should have to settle for “half a loaf.”

“The idea to base a new wage on the old, possibly discriminatory wage, simply perpetuates the discrimination, “ said Assemblymember Nora Campos (D-San Jose). “Instead, a woman should be judged on her qualifications for the position. If she meets the qualifications with her education, experience and training, she should be paid consistent with the amount the employer has determined to be fair compensation. Period.”

“I am proud to stand with my California Legislative Women’s Caucus colleagues to shed light on issues directly affecting women and families in California,” said Senator Connie M. Leyva (D-Chino). “This year, I look forward to working on legislation to ensure reliable scheduling for workers. Reliable scheduling will ensure better work-life balance for workers so that they are able to plan to take their kids to school, care for an elderly parent or take a loved one to the doctor. Just as importantly, reliable scheduling means reliable paychecks, so workers will know both when they are working and what pay they can rely on to help provide for themselves and their families.”

The Women’s Caucus legislative platform is supported by the Stronger California Advocates Network, a coalition of 29 advocacy groups from around the state.

"Communities across the state are behind the Stronger California Agenda because promoting the economic security of women buoys their families and the state's economy," said Noreen Farrell, chair of the Stronger California Advocates Network and executive director of Equal Rights Advocates. "Stronger California Advocates cheer the Legislative Women's Caucus choice of priority bills addressing poverty, expanding access to childcare, and promoting fair workplaces and look forward to working with them to pass these bills this session."

Women's Caucus priority legislation and budget action:

Equal Pay and Job Opportunities

Gender Pay Equity – AB 1676 (Assemblymember Campos)

AB 1676 will give women more bargaining power when negotiating their salaries by removing past salary history from a new salary determination. AB 1676 prohibits employers from seeking job candidates' salary histories and requires that employers provide a salary range to a job applicant, upon reasonable request.

Access to Childcare

Child Care Budget Request -- Democratic members of the Women's Caucus

To accurately reflect the reality that California is a state where mothers are significant contributors to the economy, the Legislative Women's Caucus requests an initial investment of \$800 million in the 2016-17 budget to repair the infrastructure of a state-supported childcare system that has been built over many years and is at risk of deteriorating due to recession-era budget cuts. This investment would serve tens of thousands of children, prioritize our youngest learners (0-3 year olds), prevent disruption of care for children, and recognize the important and professional nature of the work providers deliver to our state's working families.

Family-Friendly Workplaces

New Parent Leave—To be Introduced (Senator Jackson)

Senator Jackson will introduce a bill to provide three months of job-protected maternity and paternity leave for almost all California employees. Under current law, when an employee works for a small employer (5-49 employees), new birth mothers are able to take only 6-8 weeks to recover from the birth of their child without fear of losing their jobs. In addition, new birth fathers and new adoptive parents working for an employer of the same size have no right to job-protected leave. This bill will address these inequities and inadequacies by ensuring that new parents working for an employer of 5 or more have a right to up to 3 months of job-protected leave while caring for a new child.

The Reliable Scheduling Act—SB 878 (Senator Leyva)

Senate Bill 878 will create certainty for workers and employers by giving employees adequate advance notice of their schedule so they may better plan their lives. This proposal would make California one of the first states in the nation to recognize the importance of reliable schedules for workers while also meeting the day-to-day needs of businesses.

Building Economic Stability by Addressing Poverty

Repeal CalWORKs Maximum Family Grant – SB 23 (Senator Mitchell)

This bill would repeal existing state law that denies infants and children \$128 in basic needs assistance if the child was conceived and born while a family member was receiving aid unless the parent discloses and can prove that the child was conceived accidentally as a result of failed sterilization, failed intrauterine device or a rape. Repealing the MFG rule doesn't only make the program more just – it also is estimated to reduce childhood poverty rates by 7.4 percent.

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