

RESOLUTION 8

PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY

Submitted by the Committee on Women Workers and the Executive Council

There has never been a more urgent time to confront gender oppression and advance gender justice.

Working women make up 47% of the workforce, but are paid less and lack access to child care and paid leave, even though women carry the majority of caregiving responsibilities and continue to face discrimination with deep consequences for their health, safety and economic security. Women make up the majority of workers in occupations not covered under labor laws and Fair Labor Standards Act protections, such as domestic, caregiver and restaurant work.

Care work that sustains families is denigrated, devalued and uncompensated, and the burden of this work disproportionately falls on women. Women and other marginalized workers are routinely and increasingly subjected to harassment and violence in the workplace, and experience significant wage gaps in the workforce. These wage gaps are further exacerbated by race and ethnicity, with Black and Hispanic women facing significantly greater disparities.

The COVID-19 pandemic escalated these challenges. Nearly 40% of women say their family's financial situation is worse today than before the pandemic, compared with 26% of men. The pandemic has pushed working women out of the workforce entirely, deepened pay inequities, and impacted women of color more harshly with higher unemployment rates and poorer health outcomes.

During COVID-19 lockdowns, in addition to paid work, women disproportionately had to take on the roles of teacher, nurse, child care professional and domestic worker—a stark example of how women work a “double shift.” More than 1 million women who worked prior to the pandemic have not returned to work, in large measure because of caregiving responsibilities.

Against this backdrop, there has been a radical uptick in

the enactment of legislation that limits voting rights, the right to organize and bargain collectively, reproductive health care services and LGBTQ+ protections, further marginalizing the women and gender-oppressed individuals most vulnerable to economic insecurity and violence. State and local legislatures have introduced hundreds and hundreds of limits on voting rights and reproductive health care services this year, threatening to silence worker voices and undermine collectively bargained benefits.

By fighting for gender justice, our labor movement builds an economy and a society that respects and protects working people, supports democracy in the workplace and the community, and reinforces that the labor movement is a movement for working women. Union women know the best way to combat injustice is with a union card. Women will make up 50% of union membership by 2025. Union workers have greater access to paid sick days and parental leave. Almost all union members (94%) have health insurance through their employers, compared with 69% for nonunion workers. Women covered by union contracts lost fewer jobs in 2019–2020 than women who were not in unions. Union women reliably vote for pro-worker candidates at rates of 10 to 20 points higher than all voters. And 68% of women overall favor unions.

In partnership with affiliated unions and constituency groups, the AFL-CIO therefore resolves to do the following:

- **Advocate for women's economic equity.** The AFL-CIO will continue to advance legislative, legal and collective bargaining strategies to end gender, race and ethnic pay disparities. The AFL-CIO supports paid family and medical leave, universal high-quality child care for every family, expanded unemployment insurance and sick leave. We believe all individuals should have quality health care and the right to control their own bodies, including equal access to contraception and

reproductive health care, regardless of where they work or live. The AFL-CIO Committee on Women Workers will review the impact of state legislation that restricts access to reproductive health care for women, their partners and families, and develop a response to ensure these laws do not infringe on the protections of collectively bargained health care benefits. We will support pathways for women workers to gain access to education and training programs that lead to good union jobs in every sector of the economy. Together, these measures will free women from having to stay in low-paying jobs that put them at risk just to hold on to health insurance and paychecks, and will open up opportunities for fair wages, benefits, and the ability to provide a healthy and secure life for themselves and their families.

- **Advocate for gender justice.** Gender justice requires bold action to promote equity, safety, security and dignity for all people, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation or gender expression. Respecting the self-determination of workers means respecting workers' identities, and respecting gender pronouns. We recognize that gender discrimination is exacerbated by systemic racism for Black, Hispanic, Asian and Indigenous workers. We commit to building unity and deepening our commitments to gender and social justice throughout the AFL-CIO to make the trade union movement stronger, and to take action to address gender discrimination.

- **Protect voting rights and support pro-worker women candidates.** The AFL-CIO will give voice to working women in our democracy—through our unions and at the voting booth. We reaffirm the right of all women and gender-oppressed people to vote. We will continue to fight assaults on voting access, which disproportionately affect women voters, including voter identification requirements, limitations on mail-in and early voting and the closing of voting locations. We will support pro-worker women candidates in elections at every level of government.
- **Support leadership development for union women.** We, the unions of the AFL-CIO, recommit ourselves to support leadership development and mentorship to further advance women and gender-oppressed individuals at every level of our unions and federation.
- **Combat gender-based harassment and violence in the workplace.** The AFL-CIO will begin laying the groundwork for eventual U.S. ratification of International Labor Organization Convention 190, the first global binding treaty on ending violence and harassment in the world of work. In the meantime, we will advocate to implement the framework of Convention 190 to tackle the root causes of workplace violence and harassment, and to revise the U.S. National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence accordingly.