

July 16, 2014

RE: Support the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (S. 942)

Dear Senator:

As organizations that represent health care providers and public health professionals who strive to improve the health of women and babies across the country, we urge you to support the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (S. 942). This bill is critically important because no woman should have to choose between having a healthy pregnancy and keeping her job.

Three-quarters of women will be pregnant and employed at some point in their lives. For most women, pregnancy complications are few and a healthy birth follows. However, some pregnant women will need to make minor adjustments in their work activities, as recommended by their health care providers, in order to sustain a healthy pregnancy. These medically necessary accommodations can include more frequent bathroom breaks, opportunities to stay hydrated, lifting restrictions, or access to a chair or stool to decrease time spent standing.

Unfortunately, too many pregnant workers face barriers to incorporating even these small changes to their workdays, changes that would help safeguard a healthy pregnancy or prevent harm to a higher-risk pregnancy. They are denied simple, no-cost or low-cost, temporary adjustments in their work settings or activities and instead risk being fired or forced to take unpaid leave. When that happens, the impact on both mother and baby may be long-lasting and severe. One of the main predictors of a healthy pregnancy is early and consistent prenatal care. Loss of employment and health benefits impact family resources, threatening the ability to access vital health care when a woman needs it the most.

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act is a measured approach to a serious problem. Modeled after the Americans with Disabilities Act, the bill would require employers to provide reasonable, temporary workplace accommodations to pregnant workers as long as the accommodation does not impose an undue hardship on the employer.

As public health professionals and health care providers, we understand the importance of reasonable workplace accommodations to ensure that women can continue to care for their families and have safe and healthy pregnancies. As such, we pledge our support for the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act and urge you to cosponsor this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Medical Women's Association
American Nurses Association
American Public Health Association
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Centering Healthcare Institute
Committee of Interns and Residents/SEIU Healthcare
National Physicians Alliance
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine