

Legislation Text

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Recognizing and supporting working women and mothers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in honor of Women's History Month and calling for a robust federal response to our nation's first "She-cession".

WHEREAS, The Great Recession harmed industries dominated by men, the current economic downturn has predominately impacted sectors that employ women and people of color, especially in low-wage jobs, such as retail and food service that must be done in person, creating our country's first ever "she-cession"; and

WHEREAS, This year, female unemployment reached double digits for the first time since 1948, when the Bureau of Labor Statistics started tracking women's joblessness. Just before the pandemic hit, for the first time ever, there had more women employed than men. Nearly 11 million jobs held by women disappeared from February to May 2020, erasing decades of job gains by women; and

WHEREAS, White women have not been such a small share of the population with a job since the late 1970s, and women of color, who are more likely to be sole breadwinners and low-income workers, are suffering even more acutely. The unemployment rate for Latinas was 15.3 percent in June 2020. For Black women, it was 14 percent; and

WHEREAS, Bars, restaurants, and retail stores that were forced to close their doors disproportionately employ women and people of color, according to a study by the Keystone Research Center. Meanwhile, Pennsylvania workers in health care, warehouses, and grocery stores - who have worked front-line jobs during the pandemic - are nearly two-thirds female, 50% more likely to be Black, and slightly more likely to be Hispanic; and

WHEREAS, In June 2020, women regained 2.9 million positions, but those jobs, which are largely in the hospitality field, remain insecure as COVID-19's continued spread forces ongoing changes in business operations; and

WHEREAS, With one out of three jobs held by women designated as essential, the women in these vitally important and essential jobs have provided a lifeline for our Nation throughout the Pandemic and ensured the essential work continued despite the challenges and risks; and

WHEREAS, Roughly 8 percent of women who have been laid off during the COVID-19 pandemic have zero chance of being called back to the workforce compared to 6.4 percent of men, according to an analysis by EPI. Another 4 percent expect to be called back but likely will not be; and

WHEREAS, Black women were the only group of women who saw their unemployment rate rise significantly in February 2021 - up to 8.9 percent from 8.5 percent in January - and the only group of women that lost workers in the labor force. 11,000 Black women left the workforce last month, while other groups added thousands of workers, according to new data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics; and

WHEREAS, The loss of employment by mothers has made it difficult for mothers to provide for their families. Last year, almost one in four children experienced food insecurity, which is related to maternal income. More

than three quarters of parents with children ages 8 to 12 say the uncertainty around the current school year is causing them stress; and

WHEREAS, Mothers have reduced their work hours to care for children four to five times more than fathers during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, Women who work in the child-care industry have also be hit hard by mass day-care closures. More than 90 percent of the country’s 1.2 million child-care workers are women. Cuts for women keep coming in fields like education, where women are more likely to be employed. Local education jobs were down by 37,000 positions and state jobs were down 32,000 in February 2021; and

WHEREAS, Parents have struggled to find childcare during the coronavirus pandemic as many of the day-care and preschool programs attended by some 5 million U.S. children closed or were available to only essential workers; and

WHEREAS, Reporting on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women has been championed by women journalists and women-centered news outlets across the country; and

WHEREAS, The 19th News, an independent, non-profit newsroom reporting on gender, politics, and policy, has elevated the voices of women throughout the nation’s struggle with COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, The 19th News’ Editor-at-Large, Philadelphia-based Errin Haines, told the stories of local women struggling throughout the pandemic through the “Portraits of a Pandemic” series in partnership with *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and supported by the Pulitzer Center and the Lenfest Institute for Journalism; and

WHEREAS, Looking to the future, it is important that we act to change the conditions that led to the unequal impacts of the pandemic, and encourage policies that acknowledge that policies that are good for women and families are good for our economy at large. Policy changes at the federal level must include comprehensive emergency and permanent paid family and medical leave and paid sick and safe days; fair scheduling and workplace flexibility policies; rights and parity for part-time workers; and equal pay policies that focus on transparency and employer accountability; and

WHEREAS, Childcare policies must make childcare affordable for all families and prioritize the needs of historically marginalized communities. Policy solutions must ensure public funding to serve the diverse needs and preferences of families, including culturally and linguistically competent care options, home-based care, and care during nonstandard hours such as weekends, after school, and nights, when job schedules change, and in areas that are currently childcare deserts; and

WHEREAS, Most importantly, we recognize the tireless efforts of women and mothers in our community who jumped into action to support their local communities. Their immeasurable effort spent supporting their fellow residents and communities during this time should be remembered and honored long after the effects of this tragedy are over; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Council does hereby recognize the ongoing challenges faced by working women, especially working mothers, because of the COVID-19 pandemic and recognizes their struggle and calls on our federal government to proactively respond to our

nation's first "She-cession".