

# FACT SHEET | Women's Economic Security Act

*Expanding economic opportunity for a Better Minnesota*

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Governor Dayton knows that a level playing field is essential to expanding opportunity and growing Minnesota's economy. That's why Governor Dayton signed the Women's Economic Security Act (WESA) into law, which passed the Minnesota House and Senate with broad bipartisan support. This new law will eliminate barriers for women and benefit their families by ensuring equal pay for equal work, expanding family and sick leave for working families, and increasing economic opportunity in high-wage, high-demand jobs.

## How the Women's Economic Security Act Will Benefit Minnesotans

- **Ensures Equal Pay for Equal Work to Close the Gender Pay Gap.** Currently, women in Minnesota make on average \$0.80 for every \$1 a man makes. WESA will reduce the gender pay gap through increased enforcement of equal pay laws for state contractors. It requires businesses with 40 or more employees seeking state contracts of over \$500,000 to certify they are paying employees equal wages, regardless of gender. Contractors will also have to certify there are no pay gaps between men and women by job class.
- **Eliminates the "Parenthood Penalty."** WESA requires equal employment treatment regardless of "familial status." WESA prohibits employers from discriminating against pregnant women and parents with children under age 18 at home.
- **Expands Family and Sick Leave for Working Families.** WESA expands unpaid leave under the Minnesota Parental Leave Act from 6 to 12 weeks, and allows the use of leave for pregnancy-related needs. It also allows employees to use existing earned sick leave to care for an ill or injured grandchild, father-in-law, or mother-in-law.
- **Provides Stronger Workplace Protections.** Employers are required to offer reasonable accommodations to an employee for health conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth as well as unpaid break time each day to an employee who needs to express breast milk for her infant child. WESA also protects the rights of employees to voluntarily discuss their compensation without fear of retaliation from their employers.
- **Expands Economic Opportunity for Women in High-Wage, High-Demand Jobs.** Approximately 40 percent of the gender pay gap is attributed to women doing different work than men and the lower value placed on female-dominated work. WESA provides grants to organizations that help recruit, place, and retain women in high-wage, high-demand, nontraditional fields, such as STEM careers and skilled apprenticeships in the construction trades.
- **Strengthens Support for Victims of Domestic Violence.** Allows employees to use existing earned sick leave for reasons related to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. WESA will also help combat the negative economic consequences of sexual assault and stalking by expanding unemployment insurance eligibility currently available to victims of domestic violence.
- **Provides Economic Security in Retirement.** Only 49 percent of workers employed by a small business have access to a retirement plan, compared to 82 percent of workers in medium- or large-businesses. Full-time workers are also more likely to have retirement benefits compared to part-time workers. WESA requires Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) to study the practicality of offering a state-administered retirement savings plan or other alternative private sectors retirement plans to those without an employer-provided option.