



new hampshire

## **WOMEN'S FOUNDATION**

**To:** Chair Birdsell and members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee

**Re:** SB 558, relative to insurance coverage for infertility treatments, protection from discrimination during IVF treatments, parental leave, and adoption.

**Date:** January 17, 2024

**Position:** OUGHT TO PASS

The New Hampshire Women's Foundation invests in equality and opportunity for New Hampshire women and girls through grantmaking, research, education, and advocacy.

We support SB 558, the Modern Economy Act, because **women make the economy work. Let's make the economy work better for them.** SB 558 will better support women through the entire process of seeking to build their families while working.

### **Insurance coverage for IVF**

This bill expands coverage for fertility treatment to include individuals seeking pregnancy with a same sex partner or without a partner. Women in same sex partnerships who wish to conceive currently face obstacles including health insurance coverage. The health insurance system is not currently set up to accommodate same sex families and this bill fixes that issue. People who want to start a family should be able to do so in New Hampshire regardless of their sexuality.

### **Job protection for appointments related to IVF, pregnancy loss, and postpartum care**

This bill expands the requirement that employers provide time off and job protection for pregnancy-related appointments to also include appointments for fertility treatment, pregnancy loss, and postpartum care. Families hoping to conceive via IVF should be able to attend the medical appointments needed to make that happen. Pregnant people currently have job protection to attend pregnancy-related appointments but not appointments for IVF, pregnancy loss, or postpartum care. A modern economy should acknowledge the realities of care needed for conceiving, pregnancy, and postpartum. It is imperative medical appointments are attended after pregnancy loss and postpartum to ensure patients are healing and assess for signs that may lead to further complications, from postpartum depression to maternal mortality. This is an issue of maternal health.

### **Protecting earned sick time for families with babies**

This bill prohibits an employer from requiring an employee to use PTO as a condition of parental leave. Workers often don't know the fine print of internal policies related to PTO and parental leave until the employee is planning to take parental leave. Workers' earned time off benefits should not be limited because the worker is using another benefit. Workers should be able to manage their own earned time off and determine what's best for their families. Newborns and infants frequently need to go to doctors appointments and experience illness in the early weeks and months of their lives. If parents aren't allowed to save sick or vacation time for after parental leave, they may lose their jobs or they may send their children to child care sick, or go to work sick themselves. Public health is impacted when workers and children don't stay home when they are sick, causing a spread of illness in their child care centers, workplaces, and communities.

### **Women make the economy work**

Women are more likely than men to reduce hours or leave the workforce entirely when they don't have child care solutions. That includes not having sick time to care for a child who is sick and cannot return to child care. Women are the backbone of our economy, particularly in the service and retail economy, and make up a majority of workers who are teachers, nurses, and mental health and substance use counselors. We need women to stay in the workforce, and they will if they have the tools to make working and building a family possible.

### **Conclusion**

While we currently cover women's prenatal care and protect their time to go to prenatal appointments, the reality of building a family for many women includes so much more, including fertility treatment, pregnancy loss, postpartum care, and sick time after returning to work. We can and must do a better job of supporting working women while building their families. **Women make the economy work. Let's make the economy work better for them.**

Respectfully submitted,

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Director of Policy