



1 WOMEN DRIVING CHANGE

A PATHWAY TO A BETTER MISSISSIPPI

NATIONAL WOMEN'S LAW CENTER AND THE MISSISSIPPI BLACK WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & METHODOLOGY



About the Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable

The Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable (MS BWR) is an intergenerational statewide network dedicated to increasing civic engagement and voter participation among the Black community with special emphasis on championing equitable public policy on behalf of Black women and girls in Mississippi. MS BWR works to secure racial and gender equity and justice for Black women and girls, support long-term movement building and create a leadership infrastructure to facilitate the shifting of power by tackling longstanding inequities in Mississippi through civic engagement. The MS BWR is an affiliate of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation/Black Women's Roundtable.



About the National Women's Law Center

The National Women's Law Center fights for gender justice—in the courts, in public policy, and in our society—working across the issues that are central to the lives of women and girls. NWLC uses the law in all its forms to change culture and drive solutions to the gender inequity that shapes our society and to break down the barriers that harm all of us—especially those who face multiple forms of discrimination, including women of color, LGBTQ people, and low-income women and families. For more than 45 years, NWLC has been on the leading edge of every major legal and policy victory for women.

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative for providing research and drafting assistance in preparing this resource and Planned Parenthood Southeast for reviewing portions of this resource.

Design and Production: Beth Stover, National Women's Law Center; Andres de la Roche, ADELAROCHE DESIGNS

Methodology

This resource grows out of the work of the Mississippi Women's Economic Security Initiative (MWESI), a groundbreaking effort founded in 2014 that was the first comprehensive and intersectional campaign of its kind launched in the South. MWESI prioritizes economic security with an explicit racial and gender platform, engaging women, particularly women of color, with deep connections to grassroots organizing in urban and rural Mississippi to create a leadership infrastructure. MWESI began as a project of the Mississippi Low Income Child Care Initiative (MLICCI) and in 2018 became a project of the Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable.

In the fall of 2016, MWESI hosted a series of town halls across Mississippi to give women an opportunity to be heard about issues impacting their lives. Through collaborations with several community organizations, MWESI met with women in libraries, church halls, and community centers. Women shared their thoughts on what they needed to improve their economic security, including access to child care, livable wages, sufficient health care, stronger protections against domestic violence and sexual assault, and better educational and job opportunities. Their feedback helped MWESI build a meaningful advocacy agenda for Mississippi women and ensured that they would have a voice in the policy-making process. This resource grows out of those conversations.

(Specific recommendations regarding domestic violence and sexual assault will be forthcoming in a separate report by the Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable.)

EVERYONE SHOULD BE ABLE TO EARN A DECENT LIVING AND CARE FOR THEIR FAMILIES.

Yet, too many Mississippi women—and
especially Black women —are struggling
to make ends meet because they are
being shortchanged at work.



WOMEN DRIVING CHANGE

A PATHWAY TO A BETTER MISSISSIPPI

Women and girls in Mississippi have made significant strides in the past few decades; they are pursuing higher education in larger numbers than before and make up nearly half the overall workforce.¹ Black women, in particular, have seen the largest employment increase in the state over the past decade.² But this hard work does not always pay off.

Women and girls in Mississippi face laws, public policies, workplaces, and schools that place barriers to success at every turn. As a result, Mississippi's women and girls – especially Black women and girls – struggle to earn fair wages, lack access to adequate healthcare – including reproductive health care – and struggle to obtain affordable and high-quality child care. These barriers not only hold women and girls back, they undercut Mississippi families, businesses, and the entire state economy.

Women are the economic drivers of Mississippi families and their communities. Nearly three-quarters of Mississippi mothers are primary or co-breadwinners—one of the highest rates in the country.³ Black mothers are most likely to be the primary economic support for their families—8 out of 10 Black mothers in Mississippi are breadwinners.⁴

Despite women serving as the backbone of Mississippi's economy, Mississippi leaders have long embraced policies that create major economic security gaps for women and girls—especially Black women and girls. Mississippi ranks

as one of the most impoverished states in the nation,⁵ with women and children being disproportionately harmed. The lack of willpower to address these deficits is deeply rooted in racial and gender biases that seek to keep women and girls, and especially Black women and girls, under-resourced and marginalized.

But Mississippi women and girls are not accepting the status quo; they are driving change. They are meeting across the state—in libraries, church halls, community centers, and the state legislature—to push for everyone to have real opportunities to thrive unbound by unfair and discriminatory practices and antiquated laws and attitudes. Black women, who live at the intersection of these racial and gender biases, have long been at the center of movements to overhaul the state's discriminatory laws and policies.

This report comes out of that organizing and sets out a forward-thinking agenda that puts Mississippi's women and girls on the pathway to achieving gender equity and justice.

Over a 40-year career, a Black woman in Mississippi stands to lose \$849,480 to the wage gap.

A single mother earning the median income (\$26,305) has to spend nearly forty percent of her income to pay for center child care for an infant and a four-year-old.

Black girls in Mississippi make up about half of all female students, but two-thirds of girls referred to law enforcement and almost two-thirds of girls who experienced a school-related arrest.

91 percent of Mississippi women live in counties without an abortion clinic.

KEY FINDINGS

Mississippi women are economic drivers for their families and the broader Mississippi economy. And yet, Mississippi's laws, public policies, workplaces, and schools place barrier after barrier in the way of women and girls succeeding and thriving.

As a result, Mississippi has the highest poverty rate in the country for women overall (20 percent, compared to 12 percent nationally).⁶ For Black women who live at the intersection of race and sex biases, the poverty rate in Mississippi (36.2 percent) is nearly three times the rate for white women (13.3 percent).⁷ And Mississippi families headed by single mothers face the worst poverty rate in the state and one of the highest poverty rates in the country (46 percent, compared to 35 percent nationally).⁸

These barriers are not only holding women back; they are holding back Mississippi families, businesses, and the entire state economy. But it doesn't have to be that way. For example, if women in Mississippi received equal pay with comparable men, poverty for working women would be cut by more than half, the poverty rate among children with working mothers would be reduced by one-third, and the Mississippi economy would add \$4.15 billion in wage and salary income (equivalent to 3.9 percent of 2016 GDP).⁹

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1 WOMEN ARE CLUSTERED INTO LOW PAYING JOBS AND BLOCKED FROM HIGHER-PAYING JOBS.



49%

Mississippi women make up about 49 percent of the overall workforce, **YET THEY MAKE UP**

\$7.25

Nearly two-thirds of workers being paid the minimum wage of only \$7.25/hr.¹⁵

+70%

More than 70 percent of those working in tipped jobs.¹⁶

7/10

More than seven in 10 workers in low wage jobs that typically pay \$11.50/hour or less.¹⁷



Black women are the largest group of women working in low wage jobs.¹⁸

2

WOMEN ARE BEING SHORTCHANGED BY THE WAGE GAP.

Black women working full-time, year-round in Mississippi **are typically paid just 56 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.**¹⁰ These gaps persist across education levels and occupation. Black women in Mississippi typically have to earn a professional degree beyond a bachelor's degree to make slightly more than white, non-Hispanic men with an associate's degree.¹¹

Other women of color also face large wage gaps in the state. For every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men: **Latinas are typically paid just 63 cents, Native women just 59 cents, and Asian women just 65 cents.**¹²



Over a 40-year career, a Black woman in Mississippi stands to lose \$849,480 to the wage gap. That means that the typical Black woman starting work at age 20 would have to work until the age of 91 to catch up to white, non-Hispanic men's career earnings by age 60.¹⁴

\$.75

White, non-Hispanic women are typically paid 75 cents on the dollar compared to their male counterparts.¹³

3

WOMEN, ESPECIALLY BLACK WOMEN, ARE BEING HELD BACK BY WORKPLACE HARASSMENT.

EEOC charge data indicate that Black women are disproportionately likely to experience sexual harassment at work. Between 2012 and 2016, **Black women filed nearly 3 times as many sexual harassment charges** as white, non-Hispanic women.¹⁹



4

WOMEN ARE STRUGGLING TO ACCESS AFFORDABLE, HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE

A single mother in Mississippi earning the median income (\$26,305) would have to pay nearly forty percent of her income to pay for center care for an infant and a four-year-old.²³ Only 10.8 percent of Mississippi children eligible for child care assistance under federal law receive it.²⁴

40% OF INCOME



5

WORKING FAMILIES ARE BEING FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THEIR JOB AND THEIR HEALTH AND FAMILY.

Many Mississippi mothers—and **Black mothers and single mothers in particular**—are working in low wage jobs without access to pregnancy accommodations, fair schedules, paid family and medical leave, paid sick days, or sufficient pay to afford child care.



1 in 4 working mothers with very young children (ages 0 to 3) are in the low wage workforce—one of the highest percentages in the country.²⁰

Over one-third of working Black mothers of very young children are working in the low-wage workforce.²¹

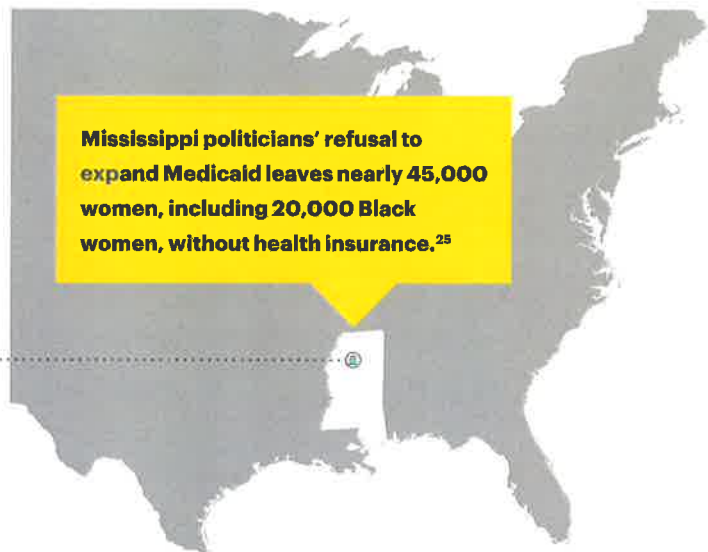
6

WOMEN ARE DENIED THE HEALTH CARE THEY NEED.

Mississippi only has one remaining abortion clinic and **91 percent of Mississippi women live in counties without a clinic.** As a result, most women seeking abortion, particularly women in rural areas, are forced to travel hundreds of miles roundtrip to obtain an abortion.²⁶



Mississippi politicians' refusal to expand Medicaid leaves nearly 45,000 women, including 20,000 Black women, without health insurance.²⁵



7

SCHOOLS ARE PUSHING GIRLS OUT OF THE CLASSROOM.

In the 2015-16 school year, although Black girls in Mississippi made up about half of all female students, they constituted **two thirds of girls referred to law enforcement and almost two thirds of girls who experienced a school-related arrest.** They were also suspended from school at 4.7 times the rate of white girls.²⁷



- 1 From 2009–2017, the number of women who held a bachelor's degree in Mississippi increased by 16 percent and the number of women who held a graduate or professional degree increased by 43 percent. Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on CENSUS BUREAU, U.S. DEP'T OF COMMERCE, AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (ACS) 2005-2009 and 2013-2017 five-year estimates Table B15001 using American Fact Finder; Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on ACS 2013–2017 five-year estimates using Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas, and Matthew Sobek, IPUMS USA: Version 9.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V9.0>.
- 2 From 2009–2017, the rate of employment among Black women in Mississippi's labor force increased by nearly 3 percent, which was greater than the increase seen by Black men; white, non-Hispanic men and women; Asian men and women; and Latinx men and women. Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on ACS 2005-2009 and 2013-2017 five-year estimates using IPUMS.
- 3 SARAH JANE GLYNN, CTR. FOR AM. PROGRESS, BREADWINNING MOTHERS CONTINUE TO BE THE U.S. NORM, Table 1 (2019), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2019/05/10/469739/breadwinning-mothers-continue-u-s-norm/>.
- 4 INST. FOR WOMEN'S POLICY RESEARCH, THE STATUS OF BLACK WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES Appendix Table 3.3 (2017), available at <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/The-Status-of-Black-Women-6.26.17.pdf> (defining breadwinners as single mothers of children under 18 years of age, irrespective of earnings, and as married mothers of children under 18 years of age who earn at least 40 percent of the couple's joint earnings).
- 5 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculation based on 2017 ACS using IPUMS.
- 6 State figure: NAT'L WOMEN'S LAW CTR., POVERTY RATES BY STATE, 2017 (2017), available at <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Poverty-Rates-State-by-State-2017.pdf>. National figure: Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on CENSUS BUREAU, U.S. DEP'T OF COMMERCE, 2019 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/>).
- 7 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on ACS 2013–2017 five-year estimates Table B17001B using American Fact Finder.
- 8 State figure: Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculation based on 2017 ACS Table B17010, available at <https://factfinder.census.gov/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>. National figure: Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on CENSUS BUREAU, U.S. DEP'T OF COMMERCE, 2018 Current Population Survey, Table POV-04, available at <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pov/pov-04.html>.
- 9 INST. FOR WOMEN'S POL'Y RESEARCH, THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF EQUAL PAY BY STATE (May 2017), available at <https://iwpr.org/publications/economic-impact-equal-pay-state/> ("comparable men" are men who are of the same age, have the same level of education, work the same number of hours, and have the same urban/rural status).
- 10 NAT'L WOMEN'S LAW CTR., THE WAGE GAP, STATE BY STATE: 2017 (Dec. 2018), available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/wage-gap-state-state/>.
- 11 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on ACS 2013–2017 five-year estimates using IPUMS. In 2017, Black women with professional degrees beyond a bachelor's made \$1.10 for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men with an associate's degree. Figures are for full-time, year-round workers.
- 12 NAT'L WOMEN'S LAW CTR., THE WAGE GAP, *supra* note 10.
- 13 *Id.*
- 14 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on ACS 2013–2017 five-year estimates Tables B20017B and B20017H using American Fact Finder. Lifetime losses due to wage gap calculated by multiplying annual losses due to wage gap by 40.
- 15 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on unpublished U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics data for all wage and salary workers in 2015.
- 16 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on ACS 2013–2017 five-year estimates using IPUMS. Figures include employed workers only and define tipped workers as all workers in a set of predominantly tipped occupations identified by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI). See Dave Cooper, Zane Mokhiber & Ben Zipperer, *Minimum Wage Simulation Model Technical Methodology*, EPI (Feb. 26, 2019), <https://www.epi.org/publication/minimum-wage-simulation-model-technical-methodology/>.
- 17 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on ACS 2013–2017 five-year estimates using IPUMS.
- 18 *Id.* Black women make up the majority (52 percent) of women working low-wage jobs in the state.
- 19 NAT'L WOMEN'S LAW CTR., OUT OF THE SHADOWS: AN ANALYSIS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT CHARGES FILED BY WORKING WOMEN 5 (Aug. 2018), available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/out-of-the-shadows-an-analysis-of-sexual-harassment-charges-filed-by-working-women/>.
- 20 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on ACS 2013–2017 five-year estimates using IPUMS.
- 21 *Id.*
- 22 *Id.*
- 23 Cost of center care for an infant and four-year-old is from CHILDCARE AWARE OF AM., THE U.S. AND THE HIGH COST OF CHILD CARE Appendix I, available at <http://usa.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/appendices18.pdf?hsCtaTracking=189a8ba7-22d8-476b-aa2e-120483a43702%7Ce7f035de-f88f-4732-8204-a30353610929>.
- 24 The figure is specific to Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) vouchers. Under federal law, children in households with incomes up to 85 percent of state median income and with parents who are working or participating in education or training are eligible for child care assistance. REBECCA ULLRICH, STEPHANIE SCHMIT & RUTH COSSE, CTR. FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY, INEQUITABLE ACCESS TO CHILD CARE SUBSIDIES 3 (Apr. 2019), available at https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2019/04/2019_inequitableaccess.pdf
- 25 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on 2017 ACS one-year estimates using IPUMS.
- 26 GUTTMACHER INSTITUTE, STATE FACTS ABOUT ABORTION: MISSISSIPPI (2018), available at https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/state-facts-about-abortion-mississippi?gclid=EAlaQobChMlpqKs47Pu4QIVj1mGCh1FsgHOEAAYASAAEglimPD_BwE
- 27 Nat'l Women's Law Ctr. calculations based on U.S. Dep't of Educ., Civil Rights Data Collection, 2015-2016 Data.