

Legislators need to pass Women's Equality Act

To the Editor:

As a member of an organization that is part of the Women's Equality Coalition, as a New Yorker, and as a woman, I urge state lawmakers to return to Albany and pass the Women's Equality Act. Every day this bill goes without further action by members of the state assembly and state senate is a day that women continue to be treated unfairly.

Women in New York earn only 84 percent of what men in comparable positions earn (the disparity is greater for African American and Hispanic women), with the result that after a lifetime of income inequality a woman is twice as likely to live out her old age in poverty. Furthermore, women who are pregnant or who have children face discrimination in hiring and promotion, and 80 percent of public assistance claims filed for families are filed by women. As a society we cannot continue to tolerate these sorts of discrimination, morally or economically.

The Women's Equality Act contains provisions that would advance pay equity, end discrimination against pregnant workers and low-income families. In addition, since women are five times more likely than men to be sexually harassed, and one in four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime, we also need the provisions of the act that protect victims of these acts from further penalization by existing laws. The same goes for victims of human trafficking, who are also disproportionately women.

Women's reproductive freedom is also protected by the act, and in a way that brings New York law into compliance with federal law.

Please join me in calling upon lawmakers to go back to the capitol and finish what was started last spring so there can be a better New York for women and families.

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