

CA bills target gender pay gaps, child care ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The California Legislative Women's Caucus announced a package of bills Tuesday aimed at improving the lives of working women by requiring employers to justify pay gaps among male and female employees and increase state-subsidized child care by \$600 million.

The bills would also create more stability in work schedules and eliminate a rule that prohibits additional CalWORKS benefits for children born while a family is already receiving welfare assistance.

Lawmakers said the bills are needed to address the changing economic roles of women, who make up half of the state's workforce, but who typically earn less than their male coworkers and struggle to find affordable childcare.

"We are at an important juncture for California and California women, a place where we both can make a difference and recognize that a difference needs to be made," Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson, D-Santa Barbara, chair of the California Legislative Women's Caucus, said in a statement. "This isn't just about the pocketbooks of California's families, although that's important. This is also about building a strong future for all of California."

Jackson authored SB358, which would require employers to demonstrate why a man in a comparable job makes more than a female counterpart. The bill would also increase disclosures for employees who want to know what coworkers in similar positions earn and strengthens retaliation protections for those who challenge potential pay gaps.

Other bills included:

- SB548 by Senate Leader Kevin de León, D-Los Angeles, and Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins, D-San Diego, would allow child care workers to collectively bargain. The women's caucus is also requesting an additional \$600 million to increase subsidized child care slots across the state.
- SB357 by Assembly members David Chiu, D-San Francisco, and Shirley Weber, D-San Diego, would require large retailers and restaurants in California to post workers' schedules at least two weeks in advance or pay increased wages for last minute changes.
- SB23 by Sen. Holly Mitchell, D-Los Angeles, would repeal a state law known as the Maximum Family Grant that denies additional CalWORKS payments for children conceived while the parents were receiving welfare.

"As we enter 2015 with both the biggest budget surplus in recent memory and the highest level of child poverty of any state it is critical we have an honest conversation about ways to reinvest in California's most important resource, our families and children, " Mitchell said in a statement.

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