



2026-2027 Advocacy Agenda

THE AGENDA FOR WOMEN



WNY WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

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2026-2027 ADVOCACY AGENDA

The **2026-2027 Agenda for Women** is a bold, nonpartisan strategy aimed at accelerating women's economic opportunity by prioritizing balanced representation. When women's economic growth is optimized the results show stronger families, stronger communities, and a stronger Western New York for all.

The WNY Women's Foundation is the **leading advocate for issues disproportionately impacting women in our region**. Advocacy is a major part of our work and is a strategic tool to ensure that all women in our community have the support, resources, and networks they need to thrive.

Central to our advocacy work are conversations and partnerships in Western New York and across New York State, all aimed at **creating big, systemic change that empowers women and promotes balanced representation**.

The WNY Women's Foundation transforms systems, culture, and policy to create opportunities for each woman to thrive. Our work focuses on women's economic empowerment and women's leadership, supporting our community vibrancy.

The WNY Women's Foundation uses all approaches to amplify philanthropists as advocates, works in a nonpartisan manner, and uses our Board, Emeritae Board, and Committee members as educated ambassadors to ramp up awareness on issues impacting women and gender minorities.

It is not enough for us to invest solely in programmatic solutions to accelerate economic opportunity for women. Without meaningful change in systems, women and their families will never have a complete pathway to success. This is why **we advocate for policies and funding that break down barriers** and support movements that are creating economic change so that everyone has the opportunity to thrive and lead meaningful lives.



2026-2027 ADVOCACY AGENDA

ROLES FOR PHILANTHROPY IN ADVOCACY:

Philanthropy is a multi-faceted approach to creating solutions in our communities. The WNY Women's Foundation believes that there is a valuable place for philanthropic organizations at the advocacy table.

Foundations and other philanthropic organizations can be a voice of reason, clarity, and neutrality in important conversations with elected leaders, community partners, and other funders.

There are many ways for philanthropists to also be advocates, including as:

✦ **CONVENER**

Bringing together partners

✦ **EDUCATOR**

Informing the public, legislators,
and media

✦ **CAPACITY-BUILDER**

Growing the power of
organizations

✦ **FUNDER**

Supporting critical programs
and people

✦ **CHAMPION**

Promoting important issues

✦ **SCOUT**

Identifying solutions for
problems facing women

✦ **RESEARCHER**

Discovering compelling,
meaningful data

✦ **DEFENDER**

Guarding women's rights

✦ **PARTNER**

Collaborating across sectors



2026-2027 ADVOCACY AGENDA

THE WNY WOMEN'S FOUNDATION'S CROSS-CUTTING ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

2026-2027 ADVOCACY FOCUS AREAS:

- 1 **WOMEN ASCENDING AS LEADERS**
- 2 **WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT**
- 3 **CARE-GIVING AND CARE INFRASTRUCTURE**

- Seek out and listen to the voices of all women and gender minorities to inform our work and ensure diverse perspectives in our approaches.
- Serve as thought-leaders, bringing a data-informed, gender, and intersectional lens to conversations about early childhood development, community development, workforce development, and issues disproportionately impacting women.
- Influence policy/funding as a nonpartisan, trusted resource, impactful high-level thinker, and respected connector.
- Partner with advocacy coalitions to advance and champion policies that support women's economic empowerment and leadership.
- Provide educational opportunities for Board, Emeritae, and partners to improve our impact.
- Scale impact by focusing on research, listening, and responding to community concerns.
- Create mutually respectful relations with key local, state, and federal elected officials.
- Collate data, present in a consistent format, and amplify this community asset to media, elected officials, and partners.
- Amplify community engagement through *Women in Action*, our grassroots advocacy program.
- Convene WNY organizations serving women around issues that unite women to amplify messaging for collective impact.
- Support the advocacy efforts of others when related to our work.
- Lend our voice to community gatherings, such as Women's History Month.
- Build and sustain digital advocacy infrastructure to expand, reach, and mobilize new advocates across WNY and NYS.
- Maintain a rapid response advocacy posture to address emerging federal and state threats to women's economic programs, rights, and safety net supports.
- Engage men to help drive change that benefits our community.
- Provide education to increase access and participation in informed voting.



WOMEN ASCENDING AS LEADERS

The WNY Women's Foundation will engage the community to achieve balanced representation in leadership by driving change for the issues disproportionately impacting women in the workplace, elected office, business ownership, on Boards, and in the community. We are committed to eliminating barriers to women's advancement, including occupational, gender, and racial oppression and discrimination. This includes access to quality, affordable child care and education for school-age children and younger, aged zero to thirteen, as a workforce support.

STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- We will drive solution-focused awareness of the residual effects of the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on working women, elevating the personal and economic impact of women leaving the workforce, reversing a decades-long trend.
- Respond actively to federal-level rollbacks of programs that facilitate women's advancement in workplaces, higher education, federal contracting, and publicly funded programs
- Execute ALL IN initiative, including:
 - Coordinate Learning Collaboratives for P.O.W.E.R. Employer partners, diversifying topics of discussion.
 - Facilitate Ready, Set, Lead! plan to empower, mentor, and educate young leaders.
 - Research and share with employer partners best practices and policies for implementing balanced representation in the workplace, promoting women into leadership positions, reducing the gender pay gap, and identifying appropriate benchmarks of success.
 - Create engaging *Pathways to Process* Speaker Series that provides opportunities for leadership education.
 - Expand ALL IN to include explicit support for employer retention of women in STEM, trades, and other non-traditional career pathways.
 - Provide a supportive and facilitative safe space for women in C-Suite level, executive positions.
 - Elevate women-owned businesses & provide opportunities and education to grow these businesses.
 - Develop & implement a program to facilitate male allies in uplifting women in the workplace into leadership positions.
- Advocate for a comprehensive strategy that not only ensures a balanced workforce, but also centers women as a key driver of their family's economic success.
- Advance Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Care-giving Center as an essential workforce support for this regional economic driver.
- Support female college athletes through the UB Game ChangeHER initiative.
- Monitor and respond to Title IX and NIL policy developments that impact female student athletes, ensuring equitable opportunities are preserved and expanded at all levels.



WOMEN ASCENDING AS LEADERS

POLICY, RESOURCES & FUNDING FOCUSES:

- Promote a workforce that supports women (workplace policies and flexibility without unintended penalty).
- Strengthen system supports for workers, including affordable quality child care and elder care for the long-term. Policies that would ensure women and gender minorities can find economic security and success, along with health for themselves and their families, include:
 - Identify relevant research to better inform employers and key stakeholders on the value of child care as an investment in our community and future workforce.
 - Bring voice to the economic value of women's unpaid work at home.
 - Employer-offered or subsidized child care (lower costs for working families).
 - Paid sick leave for all workers (NYS Paid Sick Leave has work compensation and longevity limits).
- Strengthen resources for women facing gender based violence.

PARTNER WITH COALITIONS TO ADDRESS SALARY HISTORY, TRANSPARENCY & NYS PAY EQUITY

- NYS Pay Equity law awareness.
- NYS Salary history law awareness.
- NYS Salary transparency education, awareness, and continuing revisions.

ENSURE NYS AND FEDERAL VOTING ACCESS

- NYS Voting access legislation.
- Support ongoing balanced representation in elected office.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

- Partner to advocate for updated PFL benefit rates (unchanged at \$170/week since 1989) and expanded coverage, particularly for low-wage women workers, in partnership with labor and women's rights coalitions.



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ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

The WNY Women's Foundation is committed to driving opportunities and ensuring equitable resources, including career opportunities, for all women to engage in the community and experience economic success for themselves and their families—not just surviving, but thriving.

STEPS TO COMPLETE:

- Engage community partners to execute a comprehensive and person-centered, trauma-informed workforce development program that work for women and gender minorities, particularly those currently living in systemically under-resourced communities.
- Invest in WNY Women's Foundation *mPower: From Education to Employment®* initiatives.
- Grow the region's investment in education workforce models that strengthen the pipeline for women and gender minorities to move into high-demand jobs.
- Engage and support the innovation, creativity, and resilience of Black, Indigenous, and women of color and their communities.
- Engage employers to commit to creating systemic change that supports job sustainability, particularly for students in our *mPower: From Education to Employment®* initiatives. These hard-working, highly-motivated women enter the workforce from systemically under-resourced communities with little-to-no corporate exposure.
- Raise employer awareness of the Benefit Cliff effect which often derails a woman prematurely from her career.
- Expand the *mPower from Education to Employment®* model to serve more in additional high-demand sectors, including healthcare, technology, and skilled trades.
- Partner with employers to document and share ROI data on child care benefits and workplace flexibility policies to build the business cases for systemic employer investment in women's retention.



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ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

POLICY, RESOURCES & FUNDING FOCUSES:

- Improve economic security.
- Build an economy that works for women, gender minorities, and their families including:
 - Ensure that people have equal access to good jobs, including by addressing persistent gender discrimination and systemic barriers to full workforce participation.
 - Dismantle the barriers to equal opportunity in education/training that undermine the ability to compete on a level playing field, recognizing that education affects future economy security.
 - Creating employer systems and policy change to increase job retention.

PARTNER WITH BRIDGE COALITION

- Reform public benefit system to ameliorate the Benefit Cliff Effect.
- Advance Federal Paid Leave policy and funding.

LEAD CHILD CARE AS AN ESSENTIAL WORKFORCE SUPPORT

- Secure federal and state investments in quality, affordable, accessible child care as an essential workforce support:
 - Lead local and state advocacy efforts and drive Empire State Campaign for Child Care and NYS Child Care Availability Task Force agenda asks. This includes child care educator compensation and real cost of care reimbursement.
 - Inform and support Erie County LiveWell working families committee addressing child care.
 - Participate in a leadership role on Senator Gillibrand's child care task force.

SUPPORT CHILD TAX CREDIT/ EMPIRE STATE CHILD CREDIT EXTENSION

- Support efforts to strengthen NYS child tax credit (Working Families Tax Credit).
- Defend against proposed federal cuts to CCDBG, Medicaid, and other programs that disproportionately harm women, caregivers and families served by WNY programs.



CARE-GIVING AND CARE INFRASTRUCTURE

Elevated from a cross-cutting theme in our 2024-2025 Advocacy Agenda, Caregiving & Care Infrastructure is now a standalone focus area reflecting the escalating care crisis facing WNY families and the regional economy. Women bear a disproportionate share of caregiving responsibilities for children and family members with disabilities, and the policy landscape has grown more urgent. This focus area concentrates on childcare, early childhood development, and workforce-connected caregiving areas where WNY Women's Foundation plays a direct role.

Note on Scope: While we recognize caregiving as a continuum that includes aging and elder care, the WNY Women's Foundation does not conduct direct advocacy for elder care. We connect these dots as part of the broader caregiving conversation and support partners who lead in that space, but our direct advocacy role is centered on childcare, early childhood development, and caregiving as a workforce issue.

- Lead the public-private effort to develop the BNMC Caregiving Center as a flagship employer-anchored childcare model, advocating for capital investment, operational structure, and policy supports needed to open and sustain it.
- Position the BNMC Caregiving Center as a replicable model for other major WNY employment centers, creating a playbook for employer-anchored care investment.
- Lead awareness of child care as a Workforce and Economic Infrastructure Issue.
- Convene WNY care providers, employers, and families to build a comprehensive regional care economy map, identifying gaps in childcare access and workforce impact.
- Partner with employers to document ROI on childcare benefits companies are seeing up to 425% ROI, 90% report it boosts talent recruitment at the same rate as PTO and health insurance, and 86% of working parents are more likely to stay with employers who offer these benefits.
- Support the Kids Can't Wait Campaign and Liftoff WNY advocacy to address New York's early intervention crisis. NYS currently ranks 48th in the country for timely EI service delivery; reimbursement rates for EI therapists (majority women) remain below 1994 levels.
- Support Fair Pay for Home Care policy: Increase compensation for home and long-term care workers.



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CARE-GIVING & CARE INFRASTRUCTURE

POLICY, RESOURCES & FUNDING FOCUSES:

PROVIDE LEADERSHIP FOR CHILDCARE POLICY & FUNDING

- Advocate for recurring CCAP investment; push to eliminate CCAP wait lists.
- Champion Child Care Workforce Pay Equity Fund to establish living wages for childcare workers.
- Support NYS Child Care Business Navigation program.
- Advocate for an equitable universal child care system in NYS.



GET INVOLVED

JOIN WOMEN IN ACTION



Our *Women in Action* group is grassroots, accessible, and active. Receive monthly calls to action on issues affecting women and gender minorities in Western New York, New York State, and the country.

Learn more at wnywomensfoundation.org.

SUPPORT WITH AN INDIVIDUAL GIFT



Individual donations to the Foundation provide support for our critical advocacy work and can be targeted to directly benefit the programs that matter most to you.

Donate today at wnywomensfoundation.org.

FOLLOW US

The WNY Women's Foundation is active on social media and following us is a fantastic way to stay informed and involved in our work.



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