



WREN

Women's Rights &  
Empowerment Network

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# 2017/2018 Policy Agenda

**Brandi Parrish Ellison**  
Director of Policy  
and Government Relations



**Ashley Crary Lidow**  
Associate Director of Policy  
and Government Relations



# Agenda

- Introduction
- What is WREN?
- When is policy made?
- What are WREN's policy priorities?



## What is WREN?

The Women's Rights and Empowerment Network (WREN), is a South Carolina-based network that is building a movement to advance the health, economic well-being, and rights of South Carolina's women, girls, and their families.

WREN provides a strong, collective voice for South Carolina's women and girls.



## When is policy made?

- 1<sup>st</sup> Regular Session of the 122<sup>nd</sup> South Carolina General Assembly
- Starts on **Tuesday, January 10**
- Bill crossover deadline is **Monday, April 10**
- Ending for the year on **Thursday, May 11**

# What are WREN's policy priorities?

# South Carolina Equal Pay Act

- Pay discrimination persists decades after the enactment of the federal Equal Pay Act and South Carolina's Human Affairs law.
- Closing the wage gap would help lift women and children in South Carolina out of poverty
- Two-thirds of families in South Carolina have a female primary or co-breadwinner.

# South Carolina Equal Pay Act

1. Provides explicit nondiscrimination protections for employees;
2. Protects employees from retaliation;
3. Clarifies and limits reasons employers can use to justify pay differences;
4. Increases available relief for employees and improves employees' ability to challenge pay discrimination.



# South Carolina Pregnancy Accommodations Act

- More women are continuing to work while they are pregnant and through later stages of pregnancy.
- Current federal laws addressing pregnancy discrimination, leave, and disability in the workplace are too limited.
- The South Carolina Human Affairs law does not directly address pregnancy accommodations.

# South Carolina Pregnancy Accommodations Act

1. Guarantees pregnant women and women recovering from childbirth are provided reasonable workplace accommodations;
2. Adds lactation as a protected category so that nursing mothers can express milk for their infants;
3. Prohibits employers from penalizing employees who refuse accommodations, including forcing employees to take leave if accommodations can be provided;
4. Requires that employers notify and post employees' right to be free from pregnancy discrimination.

# South Carolina Pregnancy Accommodations Act

Examples of the reasonable accommodations employers could make include:

- sitting on a stool rather than stand during a shift,
- allowing as many bathroom or water breaks as needed,
- avoiding heavy lifting,
- working a light duty assignment,
- taking breaks to pump breast milk after the baby is born.

# South Carolina Healthy Youth Act

1. Requires local school districts to use evidence-based interventions that have been rigorously evaluated, are supported by credible scientific studies and are proven to be effective at reducing risky behaviors.
2. Holds school districts accountable for providing information that is consistent with the Comprehensive Health Education Act, the Academic Standards for Health and Safety Education, and all other regulations related to health education.

# Budget Provisos

1. Health Education Compliance Proviso
2. No cost-sharing for contraceptives
3. Dependent coverage of contraceptives

# Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

WREN will continue to protect:

- Access to affordable, high quality healthcare;
- Access to medically accurate, age-appropriate health information;
- Privacy in matters of personal health;
- The ability to define and determine one's own family;
- The freedom to make informed, responsible life decisions.

# Additional Policy Efforts

## Academic Standards for Health and Safety Education

- Standards act as guideposts for teachers as they select curriculum and design their lesson plans
- Standards are revised approximately every 7 years.
- Priorities for revision include requiring the use of effective, evidence-based programs and accurate, complete information in the classroom.

# What you can do

[scwren.org](http://scwren.org)

- Become a WREN member
- Follow progress on our policy agenda
- Learn more about how you can advocate for responsible policies
- Gather educational information and research
- Stay informed on events happening around the state

[scstatehouse.gov](http://scstatehouse.gov)

- Watch committee and floor proceedings live
- Look up information on your legislator
- Search for bills



# Upcoming Events and Trainings

## WREN Summit and Lobby Day

- April 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>
- Columbia, SC
- Learn more about our priority issues and lobby your representatives

## Advocacy and Issue Education Trainings

- Request a training for your local group: [info@scwren.org](mailto:info@scwren.org)

# Questions?

**Brandi Parrish Ellison**

[bpellison@scwren.org](mailto:bpellison@scwren.org)

**Ashley Crary Lidow**

[alidow@scwren.org](mailto:alidow@scwren.org)