CWEALF is a statewide, non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives. CWEALF’s legislative priorities recognize the rights of women, children and families across the state.

The 2017 legislative session was dominated by discussions about the state’s fiscal situation and the budget deficit. CWEALF continued to advocate for policies to advance opportunities for women and girls, including many that would benefit the economic security of both women and the state’s economy. While many priority bills did not pass during the regular session, CWEALF continues to monitor several bills during the special legislative session in the upcoming months, in which we anticipate the legislature will debate and pass a state budget.

Priority Issues

Paid Family and Medical Leave

CWEALF chairs the Campaign for Paid Family Leave, a coalition of more than 65 organizations and 40 supportive small businesses that advocate for the passage of a system of paid family and medical leave for all Connecticut workers. The Labor Committee approved H.B. 6212 and S.B. 1: An Act Concerning Earned Family and Medical Leave in early March. In early June, the Senate called S.B. 1 for debate and several senators shared their stories and offered moving remarks in support of paid leave. Though the Senate ultimately tabled the bill, the Campaign will continue to build momentum and advocate for an affordable, accessible, and adequate system of paid family and medical leave.

Pay Equity

On average, women in Connecticut earn 82 cents for every dollar paid to men, a disparity that is significantly larger for women of color. This session, CWEALF advocated for H.B. 5591: An Act Concerning Pay Equity in the Workforce, and H.B. 5210: An Act Concerning Various Pay Equity and Fairness Measures, which aimed to close the gender wage gap in our state. Though H.B. 5591 passed the House with bipartisan support, it was not called for a vote in the Senate. CWEALF intends to continue to advocate for a comprehensive pay equity bill that takes significant steps to close the wage gap, specifically through the prohibition of the use of salary histories in the hiring process.
Economic Success

Workplace Protections for Pregnant Women
P.A. 17-118: An Act Concerning Pregnant Women in the Workplace, which will expand employment protections provided to pregnant women, passed with bipartisan support in the House and unanimously in the Senate. CWEALF applauds the legislature’s bipartisan passage of this important initiative to ensure that pregnant women are not forced to choose between their health or the health of their pregnancy and their livelihoods.

Increasing the Minimum Wage
H.B. 6208 and S.B. 13: An Act Increasing the Minimum Fair Wage, two proposals to gradually increase Connecticut’s minimum wage to $15 an hour by 2022, did not pass the legislature this year.

Access to Justice and Safety

Protections for Victims of Violence and Trafficking
CWEALF supported the passage of P.A. 17-31: An Act Concerning Strengthening Laws Concerning Domestic Violence, which takes several steps to improve protections for victims of domestic violence, including the addition of suffocation and the expansion of the crime of strangulation. Public Act 17-24: An Act Concerning Intimidating a Witness, increases the penalty for intimidating a witness from a class C to a class B felony.

CWEALF supported S.B. 1042: An Act Concerning the Statute of Limitations for the Prosecution of Sexual Assault, a proposal to extend Connecticut’s statute of limitations to 10 years, which passed the Senate unanimously but was not called for a vote in the House. CWEALF also monitored S.B. 1011: An Act Increasing the Marriage License Fee and Surcharge, which would increase the marriage license fee to fund domestic and sexual violence services in Connecticut.

CWEALF applauds the passage of P.A. 17-32: An Act Concerning Human Trafficking, which aims to curb the prevalence and demand side of trafficking in Connecticut and significantly strengthens protections for victims.

Hate Crimes
CWEALF sincerely thanks Connecticut lawmakers for the passage of P.A. 17-111: An Act Concerning Hate Crimes, which takes significant steps to strengthen and modernize laws against hate crimes in Connecticut. Specifically, P.A. 17-111 adds hate crimes based on a person’s gender or sex.

Fair Family Laws
In 2016, CWEALF served on the Task Force to Improve Access to Civil Legal Assistance, which provided several recommendations to improve access of Connecticut residents to legal help. Senate Bill 364: An Act Concerning Access to Legal Counsel for Indigent Individuals in Certain Civil Legal Matters Involving Allegations of Abuse would have provided a pilot program to provide mandatory counsel for individuals in civil restraining orders. This bill was not called for a vote in the House or Senate.

CWEALF also monitored several bills that would have impacted laws regarding divorce and custody, including S.B. 1049: An Act Concerning Registration Fees for Counsel Guardians Ad Litem for Minor Children and Other Requirements for Certain Family Relations Matters (did not pass); H.B. 7196: An Act Concerning the Nonadversarial Dissolution of Marriage and the Issuance of a Default Judgment In a Matter Involving Dissolution of Marriage (passed); and House Bill No. 7244: An Act Concerning a Grandparent’s Right to Visitation With His or Her Grandchild (did not pass).
Bodily Autonomy and Security

Banning Conversion Therapy
CWEALF is an active member of CT Equality, a coalition leading the fight for equality and justice for Connecticut’s LGBTQ+ community. CWEALF applauds the passage of P.A. 17-5: An Act Concerning the Protection of Youth from Conversion Therapy, which passed with bipartisan support in the House and unanimously in the Senate before the Governor signed it into law immediately.

Protecting Women’s Healthcare
CWEALF also participates in the Coalition for Choice, a group that aims to protect reproductive choice and freedom in Connecticut. CWEALF supported S.B. 586: An Act Expanding Mandated Health Benefits for Women, Children and Adolescents which would protect important gains in access to healthcare made under the Affordable Care Act, including no co-pay for contraception and other important preventive services.

MISSION
CWEALF is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives.

CONTACT
One Hartford Square West, Suite 1-300
Hartford, CT 06106
860-247-6090
cwealf@cwealf.org