Paid Family and Medical Leave:

This year, Connecticut became just the seventh state to pass comprehensive paid family and medical leave. Beginning in 2022, workers across Connecticut will have access to up to 12 weeks of paid leave to care for themselves or a loved one. Public Act No. 19-25 includes high wage replacement, an inclusive definition of family, and job protection for all workers, regardless of the size of their employer.

CWEALF is proud to lead the Campaign for Paid Family Leave, a coalition that began its fight for the passage of paid leave in 2012, and will work to ensure fair and meaningful implementation.

Expand Sexual Harassment Training:

In response to the #MeToo and Time’s Up movements, the General Assembly passed P.A. 19-16: An Act Concerning Sexual Harassment and Assault, which expands sexual harassment training requirements from employers of 50 or more to employers of 3 or more and extends the amount of time to file a complaint with CHRO from 180 days to 300 days.
Combat the Gender Wage Gap:

One reason the gender wage gap persists is because women, especially women of color, are overrepresented in low-wage jobs that pay less than $15 per hour. CWEALF supported the passage of P.A 19-4, which will gradually increase the minimum wage to $15 per hour by 2023. Another bill to combat the wage gap, S.B. 765, would have protected pay differentials based on seniority from time spent on pregnancy or FMLA protected leave. Senate Bill No. 765 passed the Senate but was not called for a vote in the House.

Protect Access to Comprehensive Health Care:

As a member of the Coalition for Choice, CWEALF advocated for several bills to improve women’s health and access to reproductive health care. This year, lawmakers approved P.A. 19-70, which will establish a council on women’s health to monitor actions at the federal level that may negatively impact women’s health in Connecticut. Senate Bill No. 1078 to establish a certification process and recommendations for doula services passed the Senate but was not called for a vote in the House. Doula services are especially critical for black women, who experience increased rates of maternal mortality compared to white women.

After a lengthy debate and passage by the Senate, S.B. 977 to protect patients’ confidentiality in explanation of benefits sent by health insurers was not called for a vote in the House. Similarly, legislation to limit deceptive advertising practices of crisis pregnancy centers, H.B. 7070, was approved by the House but was not called for a vote in the Senate.
Advance Employment and Leadership Opportunities for Women:

Prior to the beginning of the legislative session, CWEALF participated in Governor Lamont’s Transition Team’s Policy Committee on Women and Girls. In January, Governor Lamont fulfilled one of the Committee’s recommendations to create the Governor’s Council on Women and Girls, a group that will coordinate a state response to issues that impact the lives of women and girls across the state.

This year, CWEALF supported legislation to support women in the workforce, including H.B. 7043 to strengthen existing accommodations for employees who breastfeed, which was approved by the House but was not called for a vote in the Senate. CWEALF also supported fair work week legislation, S.B. 764, to limit on-call scheduling practices, and H.B. 6931 which would increase employment protections for domestic workers, who are frequently subject to abuse and discrimination more than other workers.

Unfortunately, both bills were voted out of the Labor Committee but were not called for votes in the House or Senate. CWEALF also supported S.B. 933 and S.B. 934 to expand eligibility for Care 4 Kids, but neither bill passed.

Ensure Access to Justice:

In addition to its expansion of sexual harassment training and protections, P.A. 19-16 also extends the statute of limitations for several sexual assault crimes to 20 years, adopts the federal rape shield law, and creates a task force to study Connecticut’s current civil response to sexual assault.
Ensure Acess to Justice, continued...

CWEALF also supported the passage of P.A. 19-189, which will remove Connecticut’s existing statute on sexual assault in spousal or cohabiting relationships that allows married or cohabiting partners that commit sexual assault to avoid prosecution.

CWEALF testified in support of P.A. 19-23 to create a task force to study the impact of Department of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos’ changes to Title IX on the safety of students in Connecticut once a final rule is issued, which passed with strong bipartisan support. Unfortunately, two bills to limit the use of non-disclosure agreements in the workplace, S.B. 697 and S.B. 761, did not pass.

Legislation to strengthen housing protections for victims of family violence or sexual assault (S.B. 693), passed the Senate unanimously but was not called for a vote in the House. CWEALF also supported the Attorney General’s priority legislation, H.B. 7222, to clarify the Attorney General’s authority to investigate allegations of civil rights violations and initiate appropriate legal proceedings, including hate crimes and discrimination. House Bill No. 7222 passed the House but was not called for a vote in the Senate.

LGBTQ+ Rights:

CWEALF supported the passage of P.A. 19-109 which will give young people access to PrEP, medication to prevent the transmission of HIV, without parental consent. The final budget approved by lawmakers also includes funding to create an LGBTQ+ health and human services network, which will support a statewide needs assessment of the LGBTQ+ community in our state.

Lawmakers also prohibited the use of gay and transgender panic as a criminal defense with the passage of P.A. 19-27 to prevent unwarranted violence against the LGBTQ+ community.

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