



WorkLife Law Annual Report

2024-2025



Message From the Co-Directors

Dear Friend of WorkLife Law:

As we reflect on this transformative year, we see a period that tested our resilience and reaffirmed our mission in equal measure. When we stepped into our new role as Co-Directors twelve months ago, we promised to remain steadfast in fighting for a future where all people have the freedom to care for their loved ones and protect their own health without jeopardizing their economic security. That promise has never felt more urgent.

We began this year celebrating the 60th anniversary of Title VII at the Biden White House. Now we find ourselves living Project 2025—the Department of Education is being dismantled, the EEOC is being weaponized, immigrants work in fear, federal workers are being laid off in droves, and our communities are losing critical programs that support working families.

Yet through it all, we're still fighting. We're still standing with you, our partners, and the communities who need us most. We're still driving change that improves lives.

In our first year as Co-Directors, WorkLife Law launched new projects with grassroots partners, created policy and legal changes that make it easier for caregivers to meet their families' basic economic and health needs, and provided life-changing assistance to hundreds of workers and students through our free legal helpline. WorkLife Law has remained at the forefront of the national movement for work and family justice, while intensifying our focus on serving the people most at risk.

In the pages that follow, you'll find a snapshot of WorkLife Law's impact this year—victories won, partnerships forged, and lives transformed. We invite you to dive deeper into our work and discover how together we're building a more just future for working families.

With gratitude and determination,
Liz Morris and Jessica Lee
Co-Directors, WorkLife Law



OUR MISSION

The Center for WorkLife Law at the University of California College of the Law, San Francisco is a national research and advocacy organization that seeks to ensure no person is forced to choose between economic security and their family's health and well-being. The Center advances gender and racial equity by building legal rights for pregnant people and family caregivers at work and in education.

Our Team



Jessica Lee
Co-Director



Liz Morris
Co-Director



Juliana Franco
Senior Staff
Attorney



Cynthia Calvert
Senior Advisor



Rebeca Garcia
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Senior
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Manager



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Staff Attorney



Jessica Dimas
Reproductive
Justice for
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Fellow

Our Advisory Board

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Tina Sherman National Director, Maternal Justice, MomsRising

Gillian Thomas Senior Staff Attorney, ACLU Women's Rights Project

Affiliations are provided for identification purposes only.

Changing Public Policy and Expanding Legal Rights

WorkLife Law drives systemic change by equipping lawmakers, civil rights agencies, and other changemakers with tools to strengthen legal rights for pregnant people and family caregivers. This year, our expertise shaped protections nationwide, from New Jersey's pregnancy accommodation guidance to California's enhanced Paid Family Leave programs.

State-Level Victories Deliver Real Impact

Illinois became the sixth state to prohibit caregiver discrimination after [adopting WorkLife Law's model policy](#)—creating the strongest protections yet for millions of workers balancing jobs with family care. We're now partnering with local leaders to ensure equitable implementation and public awareness of these new rights.

New York and Washington joined three other states in requiring that lactation breaks be paid, advancing health equity for postpartum workers and their babies. For years, WorkLife Law has led the way in calling for paid pumping breaks as a critical measure toward ensuring all families can afford to breastfeed. To learn more, check out our policy brief [Making Lactation Breaks Affordable for All](#).

Protecting Student Parents' Futures

WorkLife Law's [Pregnant Scholar](#) program advocates for policy changes to support the millions of pregnant and parenting students pursuing higher education, the majority of whom are people of color and women. Removing the systemic barriers these students face to academic success ensures their families have an equal shot at the economic security degrees provide. In January, we shifted our focus from the federal Department of Education to the states, developing groundbreaking model policies and building the case for stronger state-level protections that keep student parents in school.



WorkLife Law attorneys
Jessica Dimas, Leah Kennedy,
Liz Morris & Juliana Franco.

“We simply cannot realize reproductive justice without the work of WorkLife Law.

Reproductive justice means people should have the ability and resources they need to parent or not parent in the safety of their own community. This means that people are treated with dignity and humanely in their workplace. That they do not need to sacrifice privacy for a paycheck. And that they are not punished or denied the full benefits of their employment based on a decision to grow their family or not.”

- Liz Ling, If/When/How Senior Helpline Counsel

Shaping New Federal Laws

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act and PUMP Act entered their critical second year, with strong EEOC and Department of Labor enforcement guidance shaped by our advocacy. Co-Director Jessica Lee kicked off the year at a White House roundtable with top federal officials on implementation strategy. Now, the battleground has shifted to the courts, where today’s legal precedents will define workers’ rights for generations. WorkLife Law experts spent the year providing intensive technical assistance to litigators—

reviewing filings, crafting legal theories, and preparing attorneys for oral argument. Our interventions have already started to create favorable case outcomes, ensuring future workers don’t have to choose between a healthy pregnancy and a paycheck.



Juliana Franco with Legal Services Funders Network Fellow Sasha Nasir at the California Work and Family Coalition statewide meeting.

Demanding Protections for Pregnant and Lactating Workers

In an [Op-Ed for Ms. Magazine](#), Co-Director Liz Morris called for an end to policies that penalize workers for choosing to start a family, like those at the shipping ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach that prevent women dockworkers from accessing lucrative union jobs. Morris’s op-ed highlights how, even in states with strong protections, like California, the fight is far from over to ensure workers don’t lose their livelihoods because of pregnancy. WorkLife Law is proud to have filed an [amicus brief](#) in the ACLU’s class action lawsuit challenging the unfair practices described in the article.

Directly Serving Workers and Students in Need

WorkLife Law's free legal support is "literally a godsend" to families on the verge of crisis. This year, we directly served hundreds of workers and students across 44 states and D.C., helping them safeguard their health and economic security.

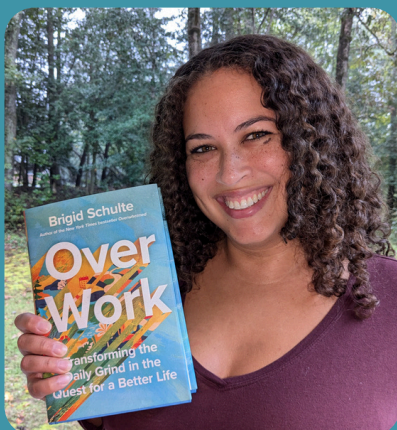
Intervening to Prevent Crisis

Through our free legal helpline, WorkLife Law attorneys provided on-demand guidance on leave and accommodations and early interventions with employers and institutions to prevent escalation and job loss. When necessary, we helped workers file charges with legal enforcement agencies and connected them with local resources and lawyers from our Attorney Network. Our early intervention approach protects livelihoods and health before situations reach crisis points.

During her fifth month of pregnancy, Claribel's arduous work picking berries was taking a heavy toll on her health, and she was forced to stop working. After the state of California denied her disability insurance claim, Claribel was unable to make ends meet.

Thankfully, she learned about WorkLife Law's free Dar a Luz helpline from a local community organization. Shortly after we submitted an appeal on Claribel's behalf, the state agency overturned the denial and issued her over \$10K in owed benefits.

WorkLife Law's free legal helpline featured prominently in a new book by award-winning journalist and bestselling author Brigid Schulte.



"Over Work: Transforming the Daily Grind in the Quest for a Better Life" explores why America's system of work is broken and offers solutions to make it better. Chapter 2 follows Co-Director Jessica Lee as she provided critical legal services to caregivers, pregnant people, and folks with disabilities on WorkLife Law's helpline during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The book offers hope for the future by highlighting the advocacy of Co-Director Lee and several other "visionary change agents seeking to remake the way we work."

Breaking Down Barriers to Abortion Healthcare

One southern caller to our helpline, "Amanda," requested time off work for her abortion. Amanda had to travel across state lines to access care, but her boss said she was required to give 60 days' notice to take time off. Unable to risk losing her job, she waited. Five days before her scheduled procedure, Amanda was informed that her leave request was being denied.

Now well into a high-risk pregnancy, Amanda told her employer she was going to take the time off for a medical emergency. Amanda's employer told her she would face discipline if she didn't report to work. It was not until she spoke with WorkLife Law's helpline attorneys that Amanda learned she had a legal right to take leave for her abortion and was protected from discipline.

Expanding Our Strategic Partnerships

Under DOGE, the federal government laid off thousands of civil servants in early 2025. As a result, WorkLife Law fielded a significant increase in calls from federal workers on our helpline and partnered with Rise Up: Federal Workers Legal Defense Network to provide specialized assistance on pregnancy, lactation, leave, and caregiving issues.

In Los Angeles, we're partnering with the LA Caregiver Resource Center to deliver legal services, helping their low-income clients access paid family leave and workplace protections without sacrificing care for their loved ones.

Our collaboration with Unbuckled—an organization supporting caregivers of children facing severe illness or disability—produced vital know-your-rights guides that have been distributed through children's hospitals and parent support groups.



"As a mother and executive who lost my job when my son was diagnosed with cancer, I understand firsthand the immense challenges of balancing work, life, and caregiving. By easing these burdens, we help families focus on what truly matters—caring for their children."

— Becca Newton, Unbuckled co-founder

Educating Workers, Students, and their Advocates

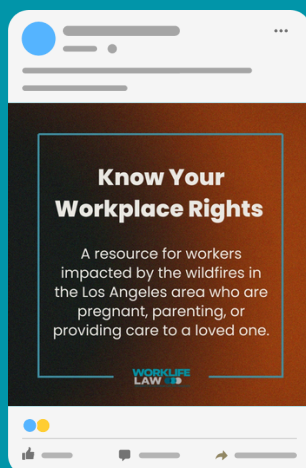
Legal rights make a difference only if people understand them and are able to use them when it matters most. WorkLife Law educates thousands of workers, students, and community changemakers on legal rights each year.

Training Key Stakeholders Nationwide

Our team delivered dozens of live trainings to over 2,500 participants. Co-Director Liz Morris presented, for example, at this year's American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists' (ACOG's) Congressional Leadership Conference. Alongside former EEOC Vice Chair Jocelyn Samuels, Liz used the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act as a blueprint to teach healthcare providers how to drive policy change in support of reproductive justice.

Creating Tools That Reach Hundreds of Thousands

We published 33 new or substantially updated resources, including guidance for abortion providers on workplace privacy barriers and a Title IX Communications Toolkit for college administrators. These materials reached hundreds of thousands of people this year.



Featured Resource

As wildfires devastated Southern California in January 2025, WorkLife Law shared [know-your-rights resources](#) for caregivers and pregnant workers, who have unique health and safety needs during fire disasters. As the climate crisis increases the frequency of such disasters and makes workplaces more hazardous, WorkLife Law will continue to provide essential information about legal rights for vulnerable populations.



Jessica Dimas training community health workers.

Activating the Community to Empower Pregnant Farmworkers

WorkLife Law trained 115 community health workers on how to support farmworkers during pregnancy. Dar a Luz, an initiative with partner CAUSE, is breaking down barriers so farmworkers can access paid disability leave to avoid exposure to toxic pesticides, as well as paid family leave to promote maternal and infant health.

Amplifying Our Message

WorkLife Law experts appeared in over two dozen major media outlets—including Newsweek, NBC News, and the Los Angeles Times—continuing to make the case for equity in education and workplaces nationwide.

Building Institutional Capacity

Co-Director Jessica Lee provided technical assistance on Title IX changes to administrators at over 60 colleges and universities, benefiting millions of students. Our Pregnant Scholar Initiative produced over a dozen new resources to spur institutional change and help pregnant and parenting students navigate their rights.

"You have been an instrumental part of getting our reproductive justice pro bono project off the ground, getting more Stanford students involved in this work, and allowing me to learn more about caregiver discrimination. The repro community here is incredibly grateful to have the opportunity to work with you."

- Founder of Stanford Law Reproductive Justice Pro Bono Project



Featured Resource

Our new state law map gives pregnant and postpartum workers nationwide a comprehensive, easy-to-use guide to the various laws impacting their ability to get work accommodations, paid leave, and discrimination protection.

Thanks to Our Supporters

Many thanks to the WorkLife Law Advisory Board and to the leadership and staff of the University of California, College of the Law, San Francisco. We are also grateful to our many supporters without whom this work would not be possible, with special thanks to:

Bigglesworth Family Foundation
California Access to Justice Commission's Infrastructure and
Innovation Grant Program
Clif Family Foundation
Genentech Foundation
Legal Services Funders Network
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