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# North Carolina Women United

## Legislative Agenda

*2019 - 2020*

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NC Women United (NCWU) is a coalition of progressive state and local organizations working to achieve the full political, social, and economic equality of all women across North Carolina. NCWU works to build women's power through grassroots activism, community organizing, legislative advocacy, and engagement in the political process.

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## Message from the NCWU President & Policy Director

For our 2019-2020 Legislative Agenda, North Carolina Women United has surveyed its member organizations and women across the state to understand what the most important issues are facing women of the state today, and how North Carolina policymakers can advance our rights and well-being through smart policy solutions. As an explicitly anti-racist organization that takes an inter-sectional approach to feminism, we have updated this legislative agenda with language and recommendations indicating that our priority issue areas each are represented with an eye toward increasing equality and decreasing discrimination along the many and intersecting streams of marginalization that can manifest in society, be that by perceived or real gender identity or sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, class, age, immigration status or ability. We are thankful to our members for the work they do to inform and advance this agenda every day, and to our policy leads,

- the ACLU-NC's Susanna Birdsong;
- NC Black Women's Roundtable's Shemekka Ebony;
- NARAL Pro-Choice NC's Tara Romano;
- NCCADV's Sherry Honeycutt Everett;
- NCCASA's Skye David,

for their best efforts to draft this agenda. These recommendations will be the basis of our 2019-2020 Legislative Report Card, which will be published late 2020.



Charnessa Ridley  
NCWU President



Lyric Thompson  
NCWU Policy Director

## Economic Stability

**North Carolina Women United urges policymakers to enhance the economic security of our state and NC families by taking steps to:**

- Pay a living wage, including equal pay and raising the minimum wage to \$15/hour.
- Guarantee all workers paid sick days for personal or family care and ensure workers can use FMLA leave to care for a sibling, grandparent, grandchild, step-parent or parent-in-law.
- Meet or exceed the actions authorized for state employees under Executive Order No.95 for all NC families by establishing a state-run, 100% parental leave program.
- Meet or exceed the actions authorized for state employees under Executive Order No. 82 by:
  - ▶ providing protection for all pregnant workers in NC
  - ▶ requiring employers to make reasonable accommodations to employees who have physical limitations related to pregnancy
  - ▶ prohibit employers from retaliating or discriminating against a worker who requests a reasonable accommodation
- Restore unemployment benefits that were slashed in 2013, as the current benefits are inadequate to meet the need of families struggling across the state.
- Invest in the education system including:
  - ▶ increases in teacher pay, most of whom are women
  - ▶ promote smaller class sizes,
  - ▶ invest in learning outcomes and promote girls' participation in science, technology, engineering and math
- Reverse the state's ban of time-limit waivers for Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training opportunities; and preserve categorical eligibility and reject additional work requirements for SNAP eligibility in order to protect the "food insecure" North Carolinians.

**“Women who take time out to have children fall behind in their careers and this impacts their economic status.”**

**- Craven County woman**

- Increase funding to the NC Housing Trust Fund and the NC Workforce Housing Loan Fund to ensure that women and working families are able to pay for housing expenses and still pay for basic necessities like childcare and groceries.

## Expand Access to Healthcare

**North Carolina Women United urges policymakers to ensure women and families are able to enjoy the highest standard of health and well-being by taking steps to:**

- Ensure healthcare coverage for the maximum number of North Carolinians by expanding Medicaid.

**“Affording healthcare is the number 1 challenge. Most jobs do not come with health insurance, or they come with insurance with super high deductibles, which causes women not to go to the doctor even with insurance. Then, NC has not passed Medicaid expansion, so the working poor cannot afford healthcare.”**

**- Buncombe County woman**

- Provide age-appropriate health and sexual education and information for students in K-12 schools.
- Protect and expand access to all reproductive health care.
- Ensure that women are able to access the full range of safe and legal reproductive health care options, including abortion care and birth control, without government or employer intrusion or restriction, and without undue financial hardship.
- Ensure women's health clinic regulations are based on sound science and medical information rather than political ideology.
- Stop the diversion of health care public funds to support anti-abortion centers ("crisis pregnancy centers"). These centers exist to push an anti-abortion/ anti-choice/ anti-LGBTQ ideology, not to provide actual health care.

**“Many of our rural health facilities have shut down and many women have neither the money, transport nor time to drive to where there are facilities.”**

**- Wake County woman**

# Promote an Inclusive and Equitable Democracy

**North Carolina Women United urges policymakers to protect civic participation, promote equality and take measures to eliminate discrimination based on sex, race, class, age, immigration status, ability or any other identity, by taking steps to:**

## Race and Gender Equity

- Expand the authority of local governments to establish citizen review boards to investigate police misconduct.
- Ratify the Equal Rights Amendment.
- Amend NC General Statute 50B to remove the discriminatory "opposite sex" requirement for dating relationships.
- Expand non-discrimination protections in housing, employment (including unpaid internships), public accommodations, insurance, lending institutions, and education.
- Increase accountability in law enforcement by:
  - ▶ prohibiting discriminatory profiling
  - ▶ requiring enhanced reporting on information collected at traffic stops
  - ▶ collecting additional information on use of deadly force by law enforcement regarding characteristics of officers and victims
  - ▶ updating training and education of law enforcement on issues of discrimination
- Increase the scope of and penalties for hate crimes, to demonstrate commitment to and further enhance the safety and security for all populations in North Carolina.
- Actively defend against racial discrimination by outlawing hair discrimination by supporting the CROWN Act creating a respectful open world for natural hair.

**“Ratifying the ERA, which could guarantee equality of rights under the law.”**

**- Vance County woman**

- Provide fair treatment to immigrants living in NC by:
  - ▶ expanding access to state driver's licenses
  - ▶ allowing all residents of NC to pay in-state tuition for higher education
  - ▶ expanding worker protections to include all workers, regardless of immigration status
  - ▶ repeal laws barring NC municipalities from designating their communities as sanctuary cities

## Voting Rights and Good Democracy

- Establish an independent redistricting process to draw legislative and congressional districts.
- Oppose legislation that:
  - ▶ seeks to create additional barriers to safety and critical resources for immigrants residing and working in NC
  - ▶ limits local governments' and law enforcement's efforts to better integrate immigrants into their communities
- Streamline voter registration and access through:
  - ▶ same-day registration
  - ▶ increased voting sites and hours
  - ▶ expanded online options for voter registration

**“Voting rights and access to convenient early voting has been under continuous attack. We clear one hurdle and two more appear. It is exhausting.”**

**- Forsyth County woman**

- Support laws that create open, transparent elections and promote checks and balances in government.

**“My foremothers fought so hard to gain that right for my grandmother, mom and the women of my generation, we owe it to them to vote every time we can.”**

**- Rowan County woman**

## End Gender Based Violence Advance Climate and Environmental Justice

*North Carolina Women United urges policymakers to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in the state by:*

- Enacting common sense gun safety regulations such as:
  - ▶ closing the background check loophole
  - ▶ increasing penalties for unsafe storage
  - ▶ restricting firearms on public and school grounds
  - ▶ mandating training and background checks in the pistol permitting process
  - ▶ authorize district court judges to order the surrender of firearms in any domestic violence protection order (DVPO) case where the judge finds it an appropriate remedy for the safety of the victim and children

**“Censure members of the GA who are convicted of domestic abuse. Pass laws against domestic abusers possessing firearms and put teeth into the laws.”**  
- Craven County woman

- Expanding protection for sexual violence victims by removing statute language that indicates consent, once given, can't be withdrawn and clarifying that victims who knowingly drank alcohol or took drugs can be considered "mentally incapacitated" and unable to consent to sexual acts.
- Adequately funding the Family Court system to support swifter and better custody outcomes for domestic violence survivors.
- Amending NC General Statute 50B/50C to accept electronic filing requests from "rape crisis centers" in addition to "domestic violence programs."
- Ending the shackling of pregnant, incarcerated people in North Carolina prison and jails.
- Take actions to end:
  - ▶ gender-based violence
  - ▶ discrimination
  - ▶ abuse of girls such as child marriage and female genital mutilation.
- Taking actions to end how NC deals with adolescent sexting- removing the felony charges and sex offender registration.
- Taking actions to end the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women in North Carolina.

*Through our consultations with members and surveys of women across the state, in 2019 we identified our lack of attention to environmental and climate justice issues as a gap in our membership and agenda to date. As an inter-sectional movement that cares about people and planet, we are working to address this issue, and will be soliciting members and content in this area. We hope to publish an amended version of this agenda in 2020 after we are able to address this shortcoming.*

**“You must unite behind the science.**

**You must take action.**

**You must do the impossible.**

**Because giving up can never be an option.”**

- Greta Thunberg to US Congress

## **Annex: NCWU Member List 2019-2020**

- **ACLU of North Carolina**
- **AAUW of North Carolina**
- **Buncombe County Women's Commission**
- **Carolina Abortion Fund**
- **Democracy North Carolina**
- **Equality North Carolina**
- **ERA-NC Alliance**
- **General Federation of Women's Clubs of NC**
- **Greensboro Commission on the Status of Women**
- **Ipas**
- **League of Women Voters of North Carolina**
- **Mecklenburg County Community Support Services, Women's Commission Division**
- **NARAL Pro-Choice North Carolina**
- **National Association of Social Workers - NC Chapter**
- **NC Business and Professional Women Foundation**
- **NC Black Women's Roundtable**
- **NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence**
- **NC Coalition Against Sexual Assault**
- **NC Justice Center**
- **NC Moms Rising**
- **NC National Organization for Women**
- **NC4ERA**
- **Onslow County Council for Women**
- **Planned Parenthood South Atlantic**
- **Politica NC**
- **Progress NC**
- **RATIFY ERA-NC**
- **SHIFT NC**
- **Women for Women - A Giving Circle**
- **Women's Forum of North Carolina**
- **WomenNC: NC Committee for CEDAW/CSW**
- **YWCA of Asheville and Western NC**

