

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 10, 2019

CONTACT: Erin Macey, Senior Policy Analyst | 317-270-0874 | emacey@incap.org

## **Building an Inclusive, Thriving Workforce: Making Work & A Healthy Pregnancy Compatible**

The [second policy brief](#) in the Institute for Working Families' inclusive, thriving workforce series makes the case for greater support for pregnant workers. Nationwide, an estimated 250,000 pregnant workers are denied small accommodations on the job each year, and an even greater number report that they are afraid to ask. Without access to paid family leave or temporary disability insurance, many pregnant women have little choice but to continue working as long as possible and to return to work quickly following childbirth. An estimated one in four women are back on the job within two weeks of giving birth.

"Women who want or need to continue working while pregnant but need small adjustments should receive them, and we should expand access to paid family and medical leave" said Erin Macey, Senior Policy Analyst at Indiana Institute for Working Families. "Otherwise, too many women will continue to face impossible choices between their health and their family's financial well-being."

Indiana has work to do to improve maternal and child health outcomes. The state currently ranks 42nd among U.S. states on infant mortality and 47th for maternal mortality. Continuing to work without accommodations – especially in physically demanding jobs that involve prolonged standing, heavy lifting and carrying, shift work, or irregular schedules – increases a pregnant woman's risk of preterm birth, a leading driver of infant mortality. Beyond saving lives, reducing Indiana's preterm birth rate would also yield significant health care cost savings; going from the current rate of 10.24 percent to the March of Dimes 2020 goal rate of 8.1 percent would result in 1746 fewer preterm births and save approximately \$103 million annually in healthcare costs.

State leaders should also increase access to paid family and medical leave. Paid family and medical leave would provide women who have a high-risk pregnancy the opportunity to reduce work hours or take a leave of absence if necessary to sustain a healthy pregnancy. Following childbirth, paid leave allows recovery and bonding time, improving the health of both mothers and infants. Most other countries and several others states guarantee the provision of paid leave through a centralized program, and these approaches can alleviate the sole burden on business or families to absorb the costs associated with a leave of absence from work.

"In short, policies guaranteeing pregnancy accommodations and paid leave should be top priorities," said Erin Macey.

The next brief in the inclusive, thriving workforce series will focus on childcare, and is scheduled to be released October 17th.

###

This policy brief and more information about the inclusive, thriving workforce policy series, including a downloadable one-pager of all five topics, can be found here: <http://incap.org/iwfw/wagegap.html>



**WORKING TOWARD  
EQUAL PAY:**  
FIVE POLICIES TO BUILD A  
THRIVING, INCLUSIVE  
WORKFORCE

Hoosiers should receive equal pay for equal work. However, pay discrimination is only part of the equal pay problem; many workers disproportionately women and people of color face structural barriers to accessing and persisting in high-quality career options. Removing these barriers would allow our families, communities, and economy to thrive.

**EQUITY FOCUSED  
CAREER COUNSELING**  
The roots of occupational segregation begin early, but equity-focused career counseling has the potential to broaden the range of career options Hoosiers consider and pursue.

**SUPPORTS FOR  
PREGNANT WORKERS**  
Workers shouldn't have to choose between a healthy pregnancy and their job. Reasonable accommodations and paid leave enable pregnant and parenting workers to persist safely in the workforce.

**CHILDCARE**  
Childcare is essential for working parents, yet for too many parents that affordable, high-quality options.

**FAIR SCHEDULING**  
Just income scheduling practices disproportionately harm caregivers. Conversely, notice and control promote the ability to plan childcare, obtain postsecondary credentials, and budget.

**ONE FAIR WAGE**  
Subminimum wages disproportionately harm workers, people of color, and people with disabilities. One fair wage sets a floor for all types of work.

LEARN MORE AT:  
<http://incap.org/iwfw/wagegap.html>

 Indiana Institute for Working Families 