



Senator Cappelletti, Senator Schwank, Senator Muth, and members of the Democratic Policy Committee, good morning and thank you for inviting me to testify on workplace accommodations for birthing people.

My name is Marianne Fray, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Maternity Care Coalition. Since 1980, MCC has served over 145,000 families, confronting the abysmal rates of maternal mortality, infant deaths, healthcare among birthing people, and inadequate early childhood education across Southeastern Pennsylvania. MCC believes in an equitable and just future for all families and is committed to challenging the structures that create barriers to equity. Our purpose is to help bring about a future where parents impacted by racial and social inequities in Southeastern Pennsylvania can birth with dignity, parent with autonomy, and raise babies who are healthy, growing, and thriving. I am here today to share MCC's community informed voice on the topic of workplace accommodations for birthing people.

The number of pregnancy discrimination claims filed annually with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has been steadily rising for two decades. Pregnancy discrimination affects all birthing people, but disproportionately affects women of color, many of whom are represented in low-income jobs. In a 2017 study conducted by the Center for American Progress, 84.4 percent of black mothers were primary, sole, or co-breadwinners as well as 60.3 percent of Latina mothers.<sup>1</sup>

Women of color represent the largest population served by MCC, and we have heard many stories from our clients who have been victims of discrimination, been denied reasonable accommodations, such as such as a chair, water, more restroom breaks, or temporary light duty while pregnant. We have even heard from clients who lost their job due to being pregnant. Many of our clients live in Philadelphia and are protected by the Fair Practices Ordinance which requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to an employee related to pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition. However, the county you live or work in shouldn't dictate whether you have access to reasonable accommodations during pregnancy.

An MCC client, Elizabeth, from Montgomery County was forced to quit her job when her manager refused to grant her a reasonable accommodation during her pregnancy. Elizabeth started working at a clothing retailer as a cashier during her first trimester of pregnancy. In her second trimester, her legs and ankles became swollen. Elizabeth asked if she would be able to rest on a stool at the register when no shoppers were in the store. Her manager denied the request and said she must stand while at the register per company policy. Elizabeth wanted to work to provide for her family and asked if she would be able to switch positions and fold clothing in the back while sitting. Her manager again denied her request. Elizabeth explained that she enjoyed her job and planned to continue with the company after her baby was born and hoped that an accommodation could be made during her pregnancy. Elizabeth's manager gave her the ultimatum - stand while working or resign from her position. Elizabeth chose to resign from the position so she could prioritize the health of her and her baby.



At MCC we believe birthing people shouldn't have to choose between a healthy pregnancy or keeping their job. Senate Bill 716 is a step in the right direction for helping to put an end to this tough decision for the women who make up 50.04% of the workforce. We believe that through accommodations, pregnant employees can continue being an asset to the workplace while also keeping themselves and their baby healthy.