



GENDER EQUITY POLICY AGENDA

Why Gender Equity:

Women face historical and social disadvantages that can affect almost every aspect of their lives from educational and economic opportunity to health outcomes. This systemic gender bias goes beyond outright discrimination and includes stereotypes, assumptions, and expectations which prevent women from living and working in the world on a level playing field with men. Gender inequity affects all of us; when women face unequal opportunity and outcomes, it negatively impacts our children, our families, and our economy.

To achieve gender equity, we must also acknowledge the role that race plays in gender bias. Black and minority women face even greater inequality than their white peers due to the intersection of racial and gender biases. Gender equity and racial equity are inseparable. If we are to successfully achieve gender equity, we must address both issues and how they are interconnected.

Our Gender Equity Mission:

AISJ works to achieve meaningful and sustainable systems change that advances equity at the intersection of race and gender.

Through the advancement of a bold organizational policy agenda rooted in racial equity and social justice, we seek to go beyond adjustments to the status quo and drive transformational change in public policy, organizational culture, and the public narrative within government, businesses, and our communities.

AISJ engages in advocacy to affirm the value of work traditionally done by women, achieve gender pay equity, ensure equitable health outcomes for women, and elevate women's voices within society. Our work varies by issue but always centers five core policy goals: Intentionality, Integrity, Inclusion, Investment, and Impact.

Gender Equity Policy Agenda:

- **Valuing Women's Work** – Value the work that women do and acknowledge its importance to our society and economy by ensuring that women, especially minority women, receive equal pay for equal work, address occupational segregation by increasing wages and securing benefits for careers predominantly filled by women, and support women owned businesses through equitable access to funding, capital, and other business supports.
- **Valuing Women's Lives** – Improve health outcomes for women by implementing systems to eliminate bias and discrimination in health care and support advancements in health equity that improve health care access and women's health outcomes.
- **Valuing Women's Voices** – Elevate women's voices by promoting their lived experiences and leadership, and provide data and educational resources highlighting the impact of gender bias and inequity on Alabama's women, children, families, and economy.



GENDER EQUITY POLICY AGENDA

Valuing Women's Work

Alabama Institute for Social Justice fights to ensure that the work of women is equally valued and equitably compensated with that of men, recognized for its importance to our economy and society, and that women receive equitable treatment in the workplace and as entrepreneurs.

The Problem

Women in the U.S. earn, on average, just 82 cents for every \$1 that men earn. However, this wage gap tends to be more significant for minority women, with Black women averaging 62 cents, Hispanic or Latino women averaging 54 cents and American Indian and Native Alaskan women average 57 cents. Although Asian women as a group average 90 cents for every \$1 that men earn, subgroups within this category earn as little as 50 cents. These wage gap differences reflect how the intersection of both racial and gender biases impose even greater inequality upon minority women.

A variety of factors are behind the gender pay gap including: gender-based wage discrimination, reliance on previous salary history in hiring decisions and differences in hours worked, with women more likely to work part time and less likely to work overtime due to familial obligations. However, one of the most significant contributing factors to the gender pay gap is occupational segregation, where jobs in differing industries are occupied predominantly by one gender or the other based on gender norms and expectations.

Women overwhelmingly occupy jobs in health care, education, child care, the housekeeping industry, and secretarial services. Historically viewed as "women's work," and thus of lesser value, women (and men) encounter clear wage penalties for working in these female-dominated occupations. The penalty is even greater for those who work in jobs historically performed by enslaved persons and which, post-slavery, continued to be predominantly filled by Black and brown women.

Faced with these obstacles in the traditional workforce, many women decide to start their own business. Black women entrepreneurs are starting new businesses at a far greater rate than other racial and ethnic groups of both genders. Yet they face deep structural inequities when growing their business and achieving success.

Lack of access to capital and funding, a key predictor of business success, coupled with disparities in how investors assess women and minority-owned businesses serve to negatively impact business growth and success. Women also face a lack of mentorship and networking opportunities when starting their own business while simultaneously facing bias and a lack of representation, particularly when starting businesses in male-dominated industries.



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The Solution

We must truly value women's work and acknowledge its importance to our society and economy by ensuring that women, especially minority women, receive equal pay for equal work, address occupational segregation by increasing wages and securing benefits for careers predominantly filled by women, and support women entrepreneurs.

An Alabama that Values Women's Work will:

- Guarantee women receive equal pay for equal work by ending discriminatory wage and compensation practices.
- Counteract the inequities in occupational segregation by recognizing and rewarding the comparable worth of women-dominated jobs in terms of skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions in comparison to male-dominated industries.
- Ensure women-owned businesses have equitable access to funding, capital, and other business supports.

Valuing Women's Lives

Alabama Institute for Social Justice works to improve health outcomes for women through the implementation of systems to eliminate bias and discrimination in health care and by supporting advancements in health equity that improve health care access and women's health outcomes.

The Problem

Across the United States women face biases in health care due to their gender. These biases can affect all aspects of patient care and often result in worse patient outcomes for women with patients receiving different diagnoses and treatment, as well as receiving lower quality health care than their male counterparts. Although such disparities impact all women, they are most likely to occur and often have the greatest impact on minority women.

Gender inequity and bias in health care has historical roots and is deeply embed in our health care systems. Throughout history, scientists and medical researchers simply assumed that human biology was the same for both men and women and excluded women from research. Even when women have been included, many research studies into diseases and treatments have disproportionate numbers of male participants. Minority participants are similarly underrepresented.

The United Health Foundation's annual Health of Women and Children Report ranks Alabama 47th in overall health outcomes for women and 49th in access to women's health providers. The report also identified a high overall mortality rate among Alabamian women ages 20-44.

Meanwhile, the latest figures from the National Center for Health Statistics reveal that Alabama has the third-highest rate of maternal mortality, more than double the national rate with 36.4 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. In the U.S. at large, Black women have a maternal mortality rate more than double that of white or Hispanic women.

Women also face difficulties in accessing health care. Thirteen percent of Alabama women between the ages of 19 and 64 are uninsured. Because Alabama is one of only twelve states that has not expanded Medicaid, one third of uninsured women in Alabama fall into the Medicaid coverage gap. Uninsured women are less likely to receive preventative care, have a regular doctor, and are more likely to receive substandard care when they do access the health care system.

Seventeen hospitals have closed across Alabama in the past decade, with twelve of the state's forty-five rural hospitals identified as "most vulnerable" to closure in the near future. Decreases in rural health care facilities may also contribute to disparities in health care as women bear the overwhelming burden of family and child care responsibilities which they must balance with additional time and transportation costs of seeking care.



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The Solution

Women in Alabama have some of the poorest health care outcomes in the nation and one of the highest mortality rates. This inequity negatively impacts not only women's lives but the lives of our children, our families, and our economy. We must eliminate gender bias and discrimination in health care and support advancements in health equity that improve health care access and women's health outcomes.

An Alabama that Values Women's Lives will:

- Educate health care professionals and the general public on gender bias, how health issues can present differently in women and men, and how to advocate for women within the health care system.
- Expand equitable statewide access to insurance coverage and health care, including access to women's health care specialists.
- Invest in research into Alabama's high mortality rate and overall poor health outcomes for women and fund identified solutions for improvement.
- Ensure that women and minorities are appropriately represented in current and future research studies for diseases and treatments.



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Valuing Women's Voices

Alabama Institute for Social Justice works to elevate women's voices, promoting their lived experiences and leadership, as well as data and educational resources highlighting the impact of gender bias and inequity on Alabama's women, children, families, and economy.

The Problem

Even before COVID-19, women continued to face obstacles to achieving gender equity both in the workplace and society at large. One key indicator of this continued disparity is the low number of women in leadership positions within government and business across Alabama.

Alabama has the sixth lowest percentage of female state legislators in the country with women comprising just 16 percent of Alabama's legislature, and only 14 percent of the state Senate. Only seven of the 22 members of the Governor's Cabinet are women and just 7 percent of county commissioners.

The situation is no better in Alabama's corporate board rooms. A 2018 analysis by the Birmingham Business Journal noted that not a single one of Alabama's public companies has a woman serving as CEO or equivalent role, and just 15 percent of the total board members across all companies were women. Of the top ten companies with the greatest percentage of women on their boards, the highest percentage on any board was 30 percent. Only four companies had more than one woman on their boards. Not a single board was chaired by a woman.

When women are not fully represented in our government and in our boardrooms, we lose out on the talent, experience, and perspectives of more than 50 percent of the population. Without women's voices at all levels of leadership, we lose out on opportunities to implement practices and policies that can positively impact our families, communities, and economy.

Covid-19 has erected further roadblocks to achieving gender equity. The pandemic has devastated jobs in industries predominantly occupied by women such as child care, hospitality, and frontline health care, resulting in increased percentages of women filing for unemployment in Alabama compared to men. As small businesses have suffered, so too have women entrepreneurs.

Meanwhile, women have taken on the majority of home schooling and unpaid care duties within families, requiring some to leave the workforce to fulfill these new responsibilities. These career absences not only remove talent and experience from the workforce but can cause delays in career advancement and limit women's access to future leadership opportunities



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The Solution

Even before COVID-19, women continued to face obstacles to achieving gender equity both in the workplace and society at large. Now the pandemic has created new challenges for women and endangered equity gains achieved in recent decades. We must take intentional action towards increasing equity by creating opportunity for women as well as promoting and supporting their leadership and engagement.

An Alabama that Values Women's Voices will:

- Guarantee equitable representation and engagement from women of diverse backgrounds at all levels of corporate and civic life.
- Increase mentorship and leadership opportunities for women of all races and socio-economic backgrounds.
- Ensure that women of diverse backgrounds are involved in the public policy process so that their knowledge and lived experiences are reflected in decision-making.
- Actively support the return of women to the workplace and community as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic.