Dear Lawmaker,

North Carolina Women United (NCWU), a coalition of organizations and individuals working towards full equality for all women across the state, came together over 20 years ago in an effort to bring more women’s voices to our state policy discussions. Women giving voice to their experiences can powerfully inform policy decisions on everything from public education to health care access to tax reform.

Viewing policy through a gender lens is a critical tool for elected officials who are crafting legislation that will affect half of their constituency. With less than 25% of our current General Assembly made up of women, it is vital that organizations and individuals representing the interests of women across the state make their voices heard.

In 2015, North Carolina women fill multiple, diverse roles in our society as caretakers, breadwinners, educators, workers, and engaged citizens. Women still face unique barriers in society because we are women, and we have set our legislative priorities to remedy that. Affordable child care and housing; protection from discrimination on the job; pay equity; access to affordable, quality, comprehensive health care; increased protections from domestic and sexual violence; and easy and accessible ways to bring women’s voices to our democracy are just a few ways to provide women with opportunities to reach our highest potential.

With member and partner organizations across North Carolina representing thousands of women, and individual supporters who have coordinated NCWU agenda assemblies in all parts of the state, NCWU has been able to reach women in all 100 counties with our message that women can make a difference in North Carolina public policy.

With our 2015 legislative agenda, we submit our priorities for policies we believe will bring North Carolina women closer to the full social, political, and economic equality we seek.

Sincerely,

Tara Romano
NCWU Board President

For more information visit www.ncwu.org.
Increase Economic Self-Sufficiency

Enhance family economic security by raising the minimum wage and tying it to inflation, requiring taxpayer-supported jobs to meet a living-income standard, and allowing local governments to require private employers to pay a living wage.

“Tired of struggling from check to check. I work at Arby’s and McDonald’s. I go to school at night, and I have no time for my children or myself; I have no time for sleep. I need a living wage so I can support myself and my family and succeed.”

-Juliet Judd, Durham, NC

Guarantee all workers a minimum number of paid sick days to help workers avoid financial ruin brought on by illness, injury, or another life event.

Pass the Equal Pay Act to help close the gender wage gap and ensure that equally qualified and equally performing women earn the same wage as their male colleagues.

Increase Home & Community Care Block Grant Funding for adult protective services and home-delivered services, allowing more frail and low-income older adults to remain in their homes.

Restore funding to the NC Housing Trust Fund to help ensure that women and working families are able to pay for housing expenses and still pay for basic necessities like child care and groceries.

Restore the prorated co-payments for the child care subsidies program and set eligibility guidelines at 200% of the federal poverty level for children 12 years and under. And, require the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education to develop a more transparent, fair, and sustainable process for allocating subsidies.

“The parent fee increase is a hardship to my family. I still need afterschool care for my son because of my work schedule. Without childcare I will have to reduce my hours or find another job to take care of my son. I need my job in order to sustain my family.”

- Tiffany

Asheville, NC

Reinstate the state Earned Income Tax Credit to restore equity in the tax system, fight child poverty, and allow low-wage workers to keep more of what they earn.

“The EITC lifts children out of poverty and helps single Mothers like myself meet basic needs like education, food, transportation, and child care.”

- Sheila

Durham, NC

NCWU.ORG
Establish a state-run paid family and medical leave insurance program and broaden the reach of the federal program by expanding eligibility to extended family members so workers can use leave to care for siblings, grandparents or grandchildren.

Bring teacher pay closer to the national average and reinstate their career status and advanced degree supplements to improve teacher morale and retention.

In recent years, I've lost coworkers to other states, early retirement, and even other occupations. As a teacher, I love my job, but it is definitely being made harder each year by bigger class sizes, more assessments, lower pay, and fewer supplies.”

NaShonda, NC Teacher

Expand Access to Healthcare

Use federal funds set aside for North Carolina to expand health insurance coverage to people who currently fall into the Medicaid gap.

Medicaid expansion will provide some of us the chance to truly live, that we've never had. As working Americans, we should always have access to healthcare no matter what the circumstance.”

Jolonda Greensboro, NC

Pass comprehensive health education legislation which provides for age appropriate sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention education for students in K-12 schools and training for school staff.
Women's Legislative Agenda 2015

End Violence Against Women

Enact common sense gun safety regulations such as closing the background check loophole and the loophole that allows domestic violence misdemeanants to possess a firearm. In addition, expand existing laws regarding child access to guns to hold adults accountable when a child is injured or killed with a firearm by increasing penalties for unsafe storage of firearms.

Amend 50C to strengthen protections afforded to victims of nonconsensual sexual conduct and stalking without an intimate or familial relationship.

Amend the definition of “domestic violence” in the Domestic Violence Criminal Pre-Trial Release Conditions statute to coincide with the definition of 50B to ensure that victims of dating violence are protected.

Require all correctional facilities, juvenile facilities, and local confinement facilities to comply with federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA).

Make it a crime to disseminate sexually explicit photos of victims when permission is not granted.

Preserve optional Medicaid services for older adults and people with a disability.

Protect access to all reproductive healthcare and 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; ensure women’s health clinic regulations are based on sound science and medical information rather than political ideology.

Repeal taxpayer funding to Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs), and require that CPCs provide medically accurate information, to be transparent and honest in their advertising about the services they provide and the qualifications of their staff; and respect patient confidentiality.

Establish clear protections for children, pregnant women and communities that are heavily affected by pollution and toxic chemicals. This includes laying the burden of proof for chemical safety on manufacturers rather than the public, and empowering NC DENR to move quickly on protecting the public from the worst chemicals.

Pass the NC Toxic Free Kids Act (SB 81) that which would require manufacturers to phase out the use of three toxic chemicals in children’s products.

There is no excuse for allowing chemicals that are untested or that we know to be toxic to be used in products that my children are exposed to every day.”

Tracy
Wilmington, NC
Amend 50B definition of “personal relationship” to include same-sex dating partners.

Create a new statutory aggravating factor for sentencing when abusers commit crimes in sight or hearing of a minor child.

**Increase Civic Participation & Equality**

Establish an Independent Redistricting Commission to draw legislative & congressional districts.

Pass legislation ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution.

Provide for fair treatment to immigrants living in NC by expanding access to state driver’s licenses; allowing all residents of North Carolina to pay in-state tuition for higher education; and expanding worker protections to include all workers, regardless of immigration status.

Oppose any ‘religious refusal’ legislation that would allow public officials to discriminate.

Update current employment non-discrimination policies protecting state employees and teachers to include enumerated categories for gay (“sexual orientation”) and transgender (“gender identity”) workers.

**71% of NORTH CAROLINIANS** oppose workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation

Prevent racial profiling and protect the civil rights of those who have traditionally been denied those rights because of race, ethnicity, or national origin.

Raise the presumptive age for adult criminal prosecution to 18.

**Protect voter rights** and build a strong, healthy civic life for residents by focusing on bills that encourage voter turnout and civic participation, including: adding another week to the early voting period; restoring same day voter registration; restoring pre-registration for 16 and 17-year-olds; and implementing an on-line voter registration option.

**WOMEN BEAR THE BRUNT OF NEW NC VOTING RESTRICTIONS**

There are now approximately
310,000 voters who may be unable to vote because of the newly enacted Voter ID law.

Of these voters, 64% are women, while only 36% are men.
Of every 10 potentially disenfranchised voters, more than 6 are women.

Of those over 200,000 potentially disenfranchised female voters, a disproportionate percentage are people of color.

**I Voted**

70% White
24% Black
6% Asian & Other

**I Can’t Vote**

57% White
34% Black
9% Asian & Other

**NCWU.ORG**
Women's Legislative Agenda 2015

Statement on Education

Access to a “sound basic education” through a system of free, uniform public schools is guaranteed by the North Carolina constitution and is essential to achieving economic security.

It's never a good time to slash school funding.

Lawmakers should make up ground that was lost and restore investments in public schools to at least pre-recession levels. Rather than allocating dollars to private schools that aren't required to open their doors to all children, lawmakers should invest in the things that will build stronger students and schools: mentoring programs for teachers, textbooks for every student, classroom supplies, and teacher pay that can sustain the needs of a family. This requires restoring the rule tying public education funding to enrollment growth. Lawmakers should also do their part to make sure every child shows up to kindergarten ready to learn by fully addressing the long waiting list to the NC pre-kindergarten program.

NCWU.ORG