

## WOMEN AND INFRASTRUCTURE JOBS: POLICY OPTIONS FOR CONGRESS

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and CHIPS and Science Act authorized the investment of billions of dollars into strengthening the American economy. In the next decade, **these investments** are projected to create several million new jobs. Careers in construction and manufacturing can provide high earnings and good benefits and often do not require a college degree.

However, women – and particularly women of color – are much less likely to benefit from these new investments. Women are fewer than one in twenty of the workers who will build electric vehicle charging stations, repair roads and bridges, lay the cable for broadband access, or build new chip factories. They are just slightly over one in ten of all construction workers, and just three in ten of all manufacturing workers. As these federal investments flow out, it's critical that policymakers prioritize policies and oversight activities that promote women's ability to get– and succeed in – good jobs in construction and manufacturing.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Invest in the pipeline with pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and training programs.*

- Fully fund the Department of Labor's Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) program by expanding funding to at least \$5 million per state. This grant program invests in organizations developing pre-apprenticeship or skills training programs helping women enter and succeed in nontraditional occupations.
- Provide oversight of the DOL's Office of Apprenticeship, supporting efforts to tackle the gender imbalance in apprenticeships leading to the highest paying careers.

### *Strengthen federal protections and invest in oversight to promote diversity and gender equity.*

- Fully fund oversight, technical assistance, and enforcement of existing requirements, including through funding the entities tasked with ensuring workplace safety and equity, including the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP).
- Pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, strengthening the Equal Pay Act of 1963 to provide robust protection against sex-based pay discrimination.

### *Support Welcoming Worksite programs and fight workplace harassment and violence*

- Invest in programs that fight workplace sexual harassment. This includes the Department of Labor's Fostering Access, Rights and Equity (FARE) grant program, which funds projects that sup-

## BY THE NUMBERS

- In 2022, more than 350,000 women worked in construction trades.
- Between 2017 and 2022, women's numbers in the trades grew by 47%.
- Despite this, women make up just a fraction of workers in these industries: 4.2% of construction trades workers, 4.3% of construction apprentices, 10.9% of the entire construction industry, 25% of production workers, and 29% of all workers in manufacturing.
- Women earn less than men: among production workers, only 11.5% of Latinas, 20.5% of Black women, and 25.2% of White women earn at least \$1,000 per week, compared to 46% of men in those jobs.

port marginalized and underserved women impacted by gender-based violence and harassment in the workplace.

- Support enforcement of the US National Plan to End Gender Based Violence, including the Department of Labor's commitments to ending workplace GBV in the world of work, through funding and oversight.

### ***Protect the right to unionize and to collective bargaining.***

- Pass the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, to amend the National Labor Relations Act and other decades-old federal labor laws to shore up the rights and collective power of workers.

### ***Prioritize provision of child care:***

- Support federal efforts to require that recipients of federal funding ensure provision of child care, such as the February 2023 Department of Commerce requirements that companies seeking subsidies to build or operate semiconductor factories must include a plan to guarantee affordable child care.
- Increase federal investments in child care and early childhood education nationally.

### ***Ensure all workers have access to paid family and medical leave, as well as paid sick time:***

- Pass the Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act, to create a comprehensive, paid family and medical leave program to help meet the needs of new parents and people with serious personal or family health issues.
- Pass the Healthy Families Act, which requires that employers allow their employees to earn up to seven paid sick days per year.

## **ADDITIONAL IWPR RESOURCES**

### **WOMEN IN THE TRADES**

- [Numbers Matter: Women Working in Construction](#) (Quick Figure, July 2023)
- [Advancing Women in Manufacturing: Perspectives from the Shop Floor](#) (Report, March 2023)
- [What Tradeswomen Say about the Change They Need in the Construction Industry](#) (Report and full survey results, November 2021)

### **PRE-APPRENTICESHIP, APPRENTICESHIP, AND OTHER TRAINING PROGRAMS**

- [Black, Latina, and Afro-Latina Women in Construction Trades Apprenticeship and Employment](#) (Briefing Paper and webinar, March 2021)
- [Apprenticeships for Women are Building the Future](#) (In the Lead Blog Post, November 17, 2020)
- [Growing the Numbers of Women in the Trades: Building Equity and Inclusion through Pre-Apprenticeship Programs](#) (Briefing Paper, November 2019)

### **WORKPLACE HARASSMENT**

- [The U.S. National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence and the Workplace](#) (In the Lead Blog Post, June 12, 2023)
- [Charting the Financial Costs of Workplace Sexual Harassment](#) (Report, July 2021)
- [Construction Industry Needs to Tackle Discrimination and Harassment](#) (In the Lead Blog Post, November 22, 2021)

### **UNIONIZATION**

- [The Facts are Clear: Unions Help Women Close the Pay Gap](#) (In the Lead Blog Post, February 13, 2023)
- [For Women in Unions, Paid Leave Is Not a Pipe Dream](#) (Briefing Paper, November 2021)
- [Union Membership Boosts Women's Earnings and Economic Security](#) (Briefing Paper, September 2021)

### **CHILD CARE**

- [Fixing the Child Care Staffing Shortage by Making Child Care Jobs "Good Jobs"](#) (Briefing Paper, August 2022)
- [The Case for Subsidized Child Care](#); (In the Lead Blog Post, April 21, 2022)
- [Expanding Child Care Options for Parents Working Nontraditional Hours](#) (In the Lead Blog Post, April 18 2022)
- [Childcare Supports for the Construction Trades in Oregon](#) (Report, May 2020)