

Memorandum in Support

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN IN THE LAW

Women #1

June 16, 2014

A. 8070

By: M. of A. Titus
Assembly Committee: Codes
Effective Date: Immediately

AN ACT to amend various sections of law, in relation to the Women's Equality Act

THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN IN THE LAW (CWIL) **SUPPORTS THIS LEGISLATION**

CWIL supports measures to strengthen laws that improve the lives of women, children and their families in New York State and provides access to justice and the full protections of our laws. The Women's Equality Act, which has passed the New York State Assembly two times, is designed to do that. The legislation addresses gender inequality and will protect and improve the lives of women and workers, including those who are most vulnerable.

CWIL strongly supports the Women's Equality Act, which seeks to level the playing ground for women and close legal "loopholes" in existing laws in order to achieve equal pay for equal work, stop sexual harassment in all workplaces (regardless of company size); permit the recovery of attorney's fees in employment or credit cases so that victims of discrimination (i.e. women who make up 77% of the sex based employment discrimination cases in New York) may be made whole in cases where they prevail; protect workers from workplace promotion discrimination because they have children; stop housing discrimination and strengthen order-of-protection laws for victims of domestic violence; end source of income discrimination by landlords protecting women who are poor; strengthen human trafficking laws increasing penalties for trafficking and making enforcement more effective, provide reasonable accommodations for pregnant employees; and reaffirm New York State's commitment to protecting a woman's reproductive health choices, making New York's laws consistent with the U.S. Supreme Court's pronouncements in *Roe v. Wade*.

The Women's Equality Act will ensure and solidify New York State's historical position as the preeminent state leader and champion of gender equality in the United States. Since the first Women's Right Convention in 1848, New York State has served as a trailblazer for our

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nation's citizens supporting progressive legislation that breaks down gender barriers for its citizens.

New York State women number approximately 10 million strong or about 51.5% of the State's population, according to the most recent census. As active members of the voting public, 56.4% of the New York's female populations, per the 2013 Current Population Survey, make up State's civilian labor force. In the 21st Century, women increasingly serve in the important role of family breadwinner, lead tax payer and chief household consumer. Despite the advances made by women and on behalf of women and their families, discrimination and barriers still persist. The legislation and access to justice afforded by the Women's Equality Act will remedy these barriers for women in New York State.

New York State's 10 million taxpaying and voting women and their families need the Women's Equality Act to address the deficiencies in our laws, help close legal loopholes and level the playing ground putting all of our citizens on an equal footing.

The CWIL supports the passage of all ten points of the New York Women's Equality Act to eradicate and break these gender inequality barriers once and for all.

For the foregoing reasons, the Committee on Women in the Law **SUPPORTS** this legislation.

Person who prepared the report: Susan Harper, Esq.

Chair of the Committee: Ellen G. Makofsky, Esq.