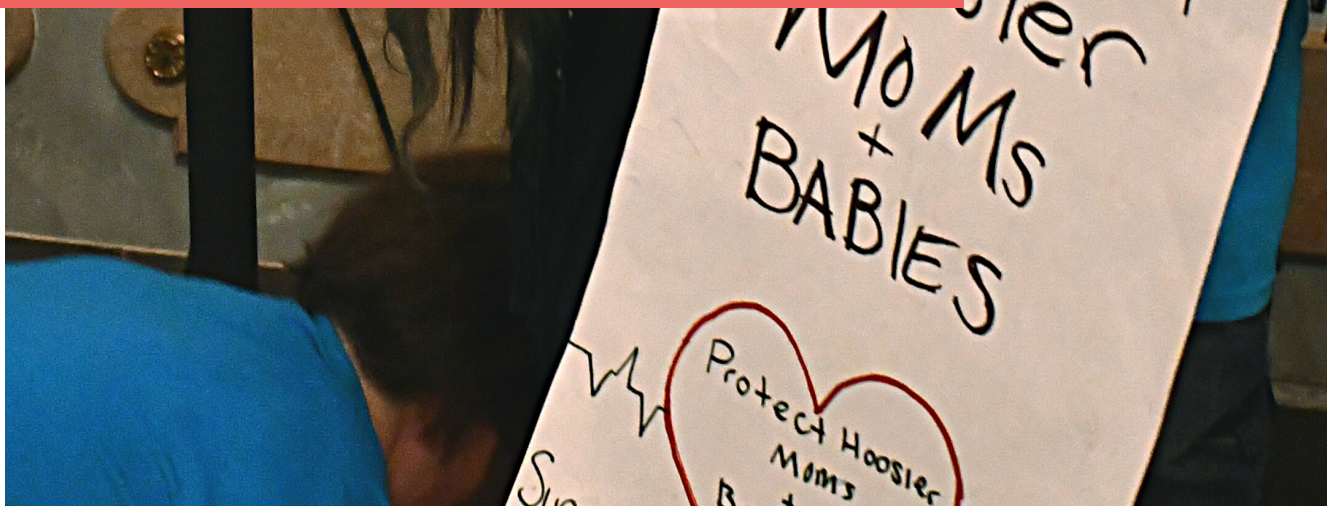




# Labor of Love:

Stories of Hoosier Moms &  
the Need to Pass the  
Pregnant Workers Fairness Act



# The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act supports Hoosier moms and families.

For the past three years, Hoosier Action has worked in coalition with other Indiana community organizations and businesses to try to improve the conditions of pregnant workers, and uplift the voices of the workers who have been forced to choose between their paycheck and a healthy pregnancy. For too long, Hoosiers have been plagued by shamefully high rates of maternal and infant mortality rates. According to the CDC, the preterm birth rate in Indiana is 10.2% and the state's maternal mortality rate is amongst the worst in the country. **Reasonable accommodations to pregnant workers-- which are often no- or low-cost but high-impact—can help to prevent complications including low birth weight, preterm birth, preeclampsia, and more.**



Unfortunately, the challenges facing pregnant workers in Indiana have only been further exacerbated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic which forced millions of women out of the workplace due to pregnancy and caregiving needs, or made them put their health at risk as essential workers. Experts are suggesting that the pandemic set women's equality in the workplace back decades. This will have a devastating impact in Indiana, where more than 300,000 households are headed by women. **To improve the lives of Hoosier moms, babies, and ensure that pregnant workers can fully participate in the workforce, Congress must pass the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act.**

# Hoosier Congresspeople, families, and business groups all support the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act.

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act has passed the House of Representatives twice, first in September 2020 and again in May 2021, with overwhelming bipartisan support, including the support of both Democratic and Republican House leadership. The majority of Hoosier Members of Congress voted for the bill. Major business groups including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Society for Human Resources Management, the National Restaurant Association, and others are also calling for the bill's passage because of the clarity it provides employers and the critical role it will play in keeping pregnant workers healthy and attached to the workforce.



## Who We Are

Hoosier Action is a non-partisan, grassroots community organization dedicated to improving the lives of everyday Hoosiers. We've got deep roots in rural and small-town communities and a statewide reach. In the past year, we've heard from hundreds of moms across the state about their experience struggling to work and maintain a healthy pregnancy in Indiana.

# The stories we've heard from Hoosier mothers outline the urgent need to protect the health of Hoosier Moms on the job.

Hoosier women are being forced to choose between the life of their child and being able to put food on the table. Too many pregnant workers are *still* being forced out of work or onto unpaid leave or forced to risk their health because of gaps in our nation's laws. Indiana doesn't have an economic future without working mothers. Hoosier Moms raise our children, work full time, and need reasonable accommodations for both the life of the mother and child. Making reasonable and clear accommodations for pregnant workers makes sure Indiana is both a business-friendly and family-friendly state.

## **SAMANTHA KERN, FISHERS**

Four years ago, while working her shift at a local hospital, Fishers mother Samantha Kern noticed she was bleeding while pregnant. After calling her OB/GYN for direction, she was instructed to leave and go to labor and delivery. She asked her supervisor to leave and explained that she was at risk for a miscarriage, but was told that she could not leave until she found a replacement to do her job. She stayed at work for at least an hour and a half longer, frantically calling people. Ultimately, she lost the baby, despite only having been an elevator ride away from seeing her doctor.





### **APRIL LOPOSSA, MARTINSVILLE**

A warehouse worker and mother from Martinsville, April Lopossa struggled to get accommodations while pregnant. During both of her pregnancies, April's employer refused to give her basic accommodations: "They had me climbing ladders at 38 weeks pregnant, stocking freight in the heaviest aisle." She worked 12-hour shifts standing, and April's breaks were limited and very short, making it difficult for her to stay in touch with her doctors. "They had supervisors that would stand there and watch to make sure you went to the bathroom while you were at lunch. If you were a minute late, they counted it against you for your attendance. It was a lot."

She was ultimately forced out of her job due to the lack of accommodations, which put her health and the health of her baby at risk.

### **CASSANDRA**

Cassandra needed to prevent her legs from swelling too much during her pregnancy. To prevent swelling, she needed additional breaks to walk around and a footstool to put her legs up when she was sitting. Her employer refused to provide her with the additional breaks she needed and did not provide her with a footstool.

## **RANDI**

Randi, who works in the medical field, developed gestational hypertension after the second trimester of her pregnancy and her doctor recommended that she be off her feet as much as possible and that she avoid COVID patients. Her employer did not comply with Randi's doctor's note most days, leaving her working with COVID patients and constantly on her feet. When she raised concerns, her employer ignored her and made her continue to work without the accommodations she needed. Without her needed accommodations, Randi's blood pressure was constantly raised by the end of the day, and she reports that she "had to go to the hospital multiple times due to the high blood pressure caused from my accommodations not being met." After she was denied accommodations, Randi's daughter was "born extremely underweight due to my blood pressure problems."

## **TWANNI MCCLELLAN, NEW ALBANY**

While working at a fast food restaurant, Twanni McClellan became pregnant. She could not afford not to work, but her doctor told her she needed to be on "light duty." When she asked for accommodations, her manager refused, and she found herself given more manual labor than ever, including lifting 60 lb boxes out of the freezer. Worried that she wouldn't be able to get another job or that the same thing would happen there, Twanni kept working, and ultimately miscarried.



## KRISTEN\*

Kristen\* needed a parking spot closer to her work location during her pregnancy. When she was not provided with closer parking, she was forced to walk half a mile on ice while pregnant to and from her office, risking her safety and the safety of her pregnancy. She reported that “the parking situation caused stress, danger, and almost caused injury.”

\*Indicates that name has been changed to protect privacy..



Thank you to A Better Balance for their assistance in producing this report. A Better Balance is a non-profit legal advocacy organization working nationally to produce fairness, equality, and justice in the workplace for women and families.



July 2021 © 2021 Hoosier Action. All rights reserved.