

**NATIONAL  
STRATEGY ON  
GENDER EQUITY  
AND EQUALITY**



**THE WHITE HOUSE**  
WASHINGTON





# National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality

## *Letter from the President and Vice President*

America is unique among the nations of the world because we were built on an idea: that every one of us is equal in dignity and deserves to be treated equally. Though we have never fully lived up to that idea—not at the time of our founding, nor in the centuries since—it is the defining hallmark of our country that we have never stopped reaching for it. From the Emancipation Proclamation, to the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, to the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act, to the fight for reproductive rights and marriage equality—and countless movements and victories before and since—America has been strengthened through the years by our tireless pursuit of greater equity for all.

This document, the first-ever United States government strategy on gender equity and equality, is a part of that noble American tradition. It comes at an inflection point for the economic security, safety, health, and well-being of women and girls in our nation and around the globe. COVID-19 has exacerbated pre-existing economic, health, and caregiving crises that disproportionately impacted women and girls long before the pandemic struck. Following the worst economic collapse since the Great Depression, women’s participation in the American labor force plummeted to its lowest level in over 30 years. Rates of gender-based violence have risen significantly, and racial and ethnic inequity has deepened. Globally, the pandemic has fueled increased economic insecurity for women and girls, and in far too many places—including, far too often, here in America—their fundamental rights remain at risk.

This moment demands a bold and united response—a commitment to do more than just rebuild to a status quo that wasn’t working for women and girls, but rather to build back better. We have already taken major strides, leading a strong and comprehensive response to COVID-19 both domestically and globally, getting our economy back on track, and centering equity in our recovery and response efforts, but we still have work to do to ensure equal opportunity for all people, regardless of gender. As we work to invest in the American people and build an economy that deals everyone in, we have an unprecedented opportunity to chart a course for a future in which gender equity and equality are instilled in every part of our country, and—through our defense, diplomacy, foreign aid, and trade efforts—to advance the rights and opportunities of women and girls across the world.

This effort is personal to us, as it has been throughout our lives and careers; as local elected officials and as U.S. senators, we each worked tirelessly to expand services and deliver justice to survivors of gender-based violence, fought for equal pay and against abuses of power, and helped craft legislation to bring greater dignity to the lives of all workers. Now, as President and Vice President, our Administration is carrying that work forward, making progress toward gender equity and equality a priority from day one.

On the day that we were sworn in together, the Vice President toppled a barrier to women’s participation that had stood for more than 200 years. Our Cabinet and senior staff are the most diverse and gender-balanced in history. And we have taken executive action aimed squarely at advancing equal opportunity regardless of gender, race, or any other characteristic. On International Women’s Day, the President issued an Executive Order establishing the White House Gender Policy Council to ensure that gender equity and equality are at the forefront of America’s domestic and foreign policy. That Executive Order also mandated the development of this first-ever national strategy to guide our work on gender equity and equality as a government and as a nation.

This strategy outlines an ambitious agenda for this Administration and those to come—a roadmap to help our nation close pernicious gender gaps and propel us toward a world with equal opportunity for all people. The restaurant worker organizing for fair wages. The migrant farmworker putting food on our tables. The leader fighting for a place at the negotiating table where the future of their country will be determined. The girl studying hard, despite the barriers that stand in her way, to discover the next vaccine or scientific breakthrough in the fight against climate change. The single father who depends on paid leave to care for his family. The woman migrating with her children to flee gender-based persecution and seek a safer life. The transgender athlete who dreams of the chance to compete free from discrimination. The millions of frontline workers—disproportionately women—whose heroic work in our hospitals, grocery stores, schools, child care centers, domestic violence shelters, nursing homes, and elsewhere kept us going during one of the darkest periods in recent history. This strategy addresses barriers faced by those who belong to underserved and historically marginalized communities that have long been denied full opportunity: women and girls of color, LGBTQI+ people, people with disabilities, and all of those whose lives are affected by persistent poverty and inequality.

Ensuring that all people have the opportunity to live up to their full potential, regardless of gender identity or other factors, is not only a moral imperative. It is a strategic imperative—a continuation of our national journey toward justice, opportunity, and equality set forth in our creation—that will advance prosperity, stability, and security at home and abroad in the years to come.



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## Section I: Guiding Principles

Gender equity and equality are imperative to strengthening communities, economies, and nations. We envision a world where every person has equal opportunity; where their safety and security are guaranteed; and where they are treated equitably and fairly at home and in their schools, workplaces, and communities. In the face of multiple challenges, the Biden-Harris Administration is committed to building back better, rather than simply returning to the status quo.

The status quo has not worked for women, girls, and all those who experience gender-based discrimination—especially those who belong to underserved communities that have been systematically denied full opportunity to participate in economic, social, civic, and political life and faced structural barriers to equality. Women’s work—both paid and unpaid—is often overlooked and devalued, despite its critical role in the global economy. Gender-based violence is endemic in homes, schools, workplaces, and communities, and far too often a hallmark of conflict settings and humanitarian crises. Women and underserved groups are dramatically underrepresented at decision-making tables. Gender inequity and inequality are rife across entire communities and nations.

By contrast, the Biden-Harris Administration is building back better. We are addressing the discrimination and structural barriers that have hampered women, especially women of color, from fully participating in the labor force and from being paid and treated equitably when they do. We are tackling our country’s caregiving crisis head-on, including by investing in care infrastructure and supporting the care workforce. We are addressing the pernicious effects of health inequity and the need for access to quality, affordable health care, including sexual and reproductive health services, and we are focused on preventing and responding to gender-based violence wherever it occurs. We are working to eliminate longstanding disparities in our education, justice, and immigration systems.

Building back better requires not just policy reform, but also a shift in the social and cultural norms that undermine gender equity and equality, undervalue work traditionally and disproportionately carried out by women, and prevent rights on paper from being fully implemented in practice. This kind of structural change is urgently needed as we recover from a pandemic that has exacerbated economic, health, and caregiving crises, face the most significant reckoning over racial justice since the 1960s, and witness grave threats to reproductive rights and voting rights.

We are committed to American leadership on the world stage. Recent conflicts and crises around the world have demonstrated, once again, that times of acute instability and authoritarian resurgence reflect and exacerbate gender inequality and that full participation is critical to meeting the global challenges we face. In Afghanistan, the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of a generation of girls and women are in jeopardy, threatening the future and security of the region. In Tigray, conflict-related sexual violence has been used as a tactic of war, further undermining stability. In Central America, women’s economic insecurity and gender-based violence contribute to the root causes of migration. Around the world, climate change poses disproportionate risks to the health, safety, and economic security of women and girls.



At home and around the world, we are committed to ensuring that every individual is valued for their contributions in all fields, from classrooms to boardrooms; from sports fields to factory floors; from academia to the arts. We are dedicated to ensuring that they have increased opportunities to serve as leaders and innovators in meeting the challenges ahead. We are also committed to their full participation in political and civic life and their meaningful engagement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding during periods of conflict and crisis. As we work with like-minded partners to defend democracy and human rights in the United States and around the world at a time when democracy is under threat, we recognize that advancing gender equality is central to that mission and must be integrated throughout American defense, diplomacy, foreign aid, and trade efforts.

Advancing gender equity and equality is therefore both a moral imperative and a strategic one; its pursuit drives the growth, development, and security of communities, nations, and the global economy. To build back better, everyone—regardless of their gender or gender identity—must have the opportunity to realize their full potential.

This strategy is the first-ever U.S. national gender strategy, produced by the White House Gender Policy Council, which will guide its implementation.

Section One establishes the guiding principles that undergird our efforts to advance gender equity and equality. Section Two outlines ten strategic priorities, acknowledging and addressing their interconnection. Finally, Section Three elaborates on the whole-of-government effort that is required for implementation, which will ensure that a focus on gender is mainstreamed across the work of the federal government.

## **Whole-of-Government Implementation**

This strategy is the product of and roadmap for a whole-of-government effort to advance gender equity and equality. Responsibility for realizing its bold vision is not the task of a sole agency or White House office, but rather a responsibility that cuts across the work of the Biden-Harris Administration in both domestic and foreign affairs.

In order to mainstream gender equity and equality across our domestic and foreign policy, we will elevate gender in strategic planning and budgeting, policy development, management and training, and monitoring and evaluation efforts. We will also strengthen data collection and analysis and take steps to ensure transparency and accountability for progress toward the goals laid out in this strategy.

This work will be conducted in partnership with Congress, state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments, foreign governments and multi-lateral organizations, and non-governmental actors—including faith-based groups, civil society, and private sector organizations—who were also consulted in the development of the strategy and have an essential role in the work ahead.

## **Intersectional Approach**

This strategy is part of the Biden-Harris Administration's efforts to ensure that all people are treated fairly and equitably and have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Therefore, it aims to address intersecting forms of discrimination and advance equity and equality.



By equity, we refer to the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including those who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as women and girls; Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

By equality, we refer to the goal of reaching gender equality at home and abroad, meaning a world in which equal opportunity is afforded to all people regardless of gender or any other factor.

This strategy reflects a commitment to address gender broadly. Our work is deeply motivated by a commitment to women and girls, in light of longstanding systemic discrimination and barriers which continue to affect their full participation and access to opportunity. We also combat discrimination and harmful gender norms that affect people of all genders: women and girls—including transgender women and girls—gender nonbinary and gender nonconforming people, as well as men and boys.

The strategy also addresses the impact of intersectional discrimination and bias on the basis of gender, race, and other factors, including sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, and socioeconomic status. Intersecting challenges negatively impact individuals in underserved communities, including communities of color, in the United States and around the world. In each of the strategic priorities identified below, policies, programs and approaches will be informed by the historical and current context of these overlapping burdens.

## **Interconnected Priorities**

In our efforts to advance gender equity and equality and further prosperity and stability at home and abroad, we will focus on ten strategic priorities: (1) improving economic security and accelerating economic growth; (2) eliminating gender-based violence; (3) protecting, improving, and expanding access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health care; (4) ensuring equal opportunity and equity in education; (5) advancing gender equity and fairness in the justice and immigration systems; (6) advancing human rights and gender equality under the law; (7) elevating gender equality in security and humanitarian relief; (8) promoting gender equity in mitigating and responding to climate change; (9) closing gender gaps in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields; and (10) advancing full participation in democracy, representation, and leadership.

We recognize that these ten priorities are interconnected. The education of girls affects their future economic security and that of our nation. Gender-based violence, including sexual harassment and abuse, hampers economic and political participation and influences the health and well-being of survivors. Restrictions on access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health services, undermine women’s ability to take care of their families, advance in the workplace, and lead in all sectors. Our strategic objectives are inherently linked and must be addressed in concert to achieve our vision for gender equity and equality.



## Section II: Strategic Priorities

### Improve Economic Security and Accelerate Economic Growth

Strengthening women’s economic security and labor force participation is essential to advancing gender equity and equality. Simply put, our nation’s economy and the global economy cannot reach their full potential when half of the workforce is left behind. To achieve an equitable recovery at home and abroad, we must ensure that all people have equal access to good, well-paying jobs; address the persistent gender discrimination and systemic barriers to full workforce participation; invest in and strengthen the care infrastructure that our economy depends on; and promote financial inclusion and close the gender wealth gap.

In the United States and around the world, women, girls, and gender nonconforming people have long faced systemic discrimination that has inhibited their full participation in the labor force, undermining their economic security, as well as that of their families. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges. Millions of women—many disproportionately concentrated in hard-hit sectors—lost their jobs or were forced to leave them to care for their families. In the United States, women’s labor force participation plummeted to its lowest level in over 30 years, with a disproportionate impact on women of color. Globally, women comprise only 39% of the labor force but represented well over half of pandemic-related job losses around the world.

The pandemic’s disproportionate impact on women’s economic security and labor force participation stems from deep-seated, structural inequities in the workplace. In the United States, the barriers to access start at the door, with discrimination in hiring leading to unemployment, underemployment and occupational segregation. Globally, women’s labor force participation has stagnated over the past two decades, with women disproportionately concentrated in informal sector jobs and low-wage work. Nearly 100 nations have laws that inhibit women’s economic participation—from limitations on the types of jobs they can hold to inequalities in property ownership—and in far too many nations, sexual harassment on the job remains legal. Furthermore, in nearly every country in the world, women earn less than men and do more unpaid work. In the United States, the wage gap remains a stubbornly persistent problem. In 2020, full-time year-round working women on average made only 83 cents on the dollar as compared to men—with women of color paid even less. For example, Black women earned 64 cents and Latinas earned 57 cents for every dollar earned by White men, with many Asian women, such as Vietnamese women earning similarly low wages. In 2019, the latest year for which data is available, Native women earned 60 cents for every dollar earned by White men.

Responsibility for paid and unpaid care work also creates barriers and fuels discrimination that hold women back in the workforce, making improvement of our domestic and global care infrastructure essential to advance women’s economic security and that of their families. Across the world, even before the pandemic, women were responsible for nearly three-quarters of unpaid care work on average, undermining their ability to participate in paid work. They also make up the vast majority of the care workforce. In the United States, nearly 95% of child care



workers and 90% of home health care workers are women, disproportionately women of color, and the care workforce has been undervalued and underpaid for generations.

The lack of affordable, accessible child care, elder care, and home care, as well as family-supportive policies including paid family and medical leave, has taken its toll, with the United States falling behind its competitors in the share of women in the labor force. Demand for accessible, high-quality, affordable care is already high and only rising. Meanwhile, high costs and increasing shortages of care for disabled and older adults leave many to rely on unpaid caregiving, with more than one in six adult women serving as unpaid eldercare providers. Women also comprise the majority of caregivers to wounded, ill or injured service members and veterans. Women who bear the brunt of unpaid caregiving responsibilities often lack access to family-supportive policies in the workplace, and this is especially true for low-wage workers; the United States is one of the only countries in the world that does not guarantee any paid family and medical leave, and over 90% of the lowest wage workers, who are predominately women and workers of color, lack any access to paid family leave.

The gaps in caregiving infrastructure have also contributed to the gender and racial wealth gaps, which are exacerbated by women's broader exclusion from financial systems. Women face barriers in access to consumer loans and other credit products, and women business owners have less access to capital. These inequalities compound over the course of a woman's lifetime, jeopardizing her financial security later in life and affecting the generations that follow. Across the world, the effects of economic insecurity are profound; women are more likely to experience poverty, hunger, and housing instability. Their safety, too, is compromised, as economic insecurity often keeps women trapped in abusive situations and increases vulnerability to abuse.

The macroeconomic benefits of closing these gender gaps and supporting women's participation in the labor force are clear. In the United States, experts found that the gains in women's earnings over the past 40 years drove 91% of the income gains experienced by middle-class families. Estimates show that closing gender gaps in the workforce would add between \$12 and \$28 trillion in global GDP over a decade and addressing the gendered economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic alone would generate up to \$13 trillion in global GDP by 2030.

The full economic participation of women and girls is critical to our economic competitiveness. As part of our commitment to foster an equitable economic recovery and build back better for all, we will:

***a. Promote Economic Competitiveness by Advancing Women's Employment in Well-Paying Jobs***

To strengthen U.S. economic competitiveness and support working families, we will ensure that women have the support they need to enter, stay, and advance in the labor force, and encourage their access to well-paying, good quality jobs. We will also work to ensure that women have a free and fair choice to join a union and that domestic workers receive the legal benefits and protections they deserve. We will seek increased pay for jobs that are disproportionately held by women by pursuing an increase in the minimum wage and the elimination of the tipped minimum wage and the subminimum wage for all workers, including those with disabilities.

To promote entrepreneurship and innovation, we will reduce gender discrimination in business and consumer lending and close persistent gender gaps in access to capital by catalyzing investment in women-owned businesses, including small and medium-sized enterprises, in the



domestic and global marketplace. This includes promoting data collection and transparency in the financial, technology, and venture capital sectors to track the proportion of investments in women-led businesses, as well as the collection of sex-disaggregated data on asset ownership at the household level to track the gender wealth gap.

To ensure equitable access to 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs of the future, we will support access to high-quality careers, technical education, and community college, and increase the maximum Pell Grant to make postsecondary education affordable for low-income students. We will also support high-quality job training to make critical labor skills available irrespective of gender and without the burden of debt. We will work to broaden access to gender equitable workforce development programs, such as registered apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships, and strengthen programs that help expand pathways for women to enter, re-enter, and lead in all industries, including non-traditional occupations and STEM fields. We will strengthen support for military spouses, the vast majority of whom are women, to find and sustain employment, recognizing the challenges facing highly-mobile military families. We will support efforts to address how gender norms and outdated workplace practices fuel occupational segregation and devalue work in industries disproportionately populated by women. Furthermore, we will work to address the rise in automation and insecure work arrangements—from the growth in independent contracting to the erosion of unions and workers’ rights—in ways that are gender equitable, recognizing that women workers are disproportionately vulnerable to these trends.

Globally, we will promote women’s access to good-paying, decent jobs in the formal sector and address the overrepresentation of women in the informal economy, including by promoting sourcing and procurement from women-owned business. We will also support workforce development and training to advance women’s representation in non-traditional sectors, such as STEM and construction. We will promote women’s economic opportunities through bilateral and multilateral diplomacy and foreign assistance, with a focus on ensuring women have the capabilities and resources needed to participate in the economy; access to well-paying jobs and leadership roles; and the social and institutional supports required to compete in the workplace. We will also promote efforts to confront gender stereotypes that devalue women’s work around the world.

***b. Address Persistent Gender Discrimination and Systemic Barriers to Full Workforce Participation***

To close the gender wage gap in the United States, we will work to strengthen laws prohibiting wage discrimination on the basis of gender, race, and other characteristics, and will increase resources for enforcement. We will also promote pay transparency, taking steps to increase analysis of pay gaps on the basis of gender, race, and other factors, and outline plans to eliminate these disparities. We will pursue policies to eliminate reliance on prior salary history in compensation decisions, which can perpetuate and compound the effects of prior discrimination. Furthermore, we will support policies to prohibit discrimination against pregnant and parenting workers. We will also work to ensure fair and flexible scheduling practices and access to paid sick days.

We will aim to eliminate harassment and other forms of discrimination in the workplace, including sexual harassment. This includes increasing transparency and accountability by ending forced arbitration and mandatory nondisclosure agreements that prevent workers from pursuing



their day in court and by strengthening prevention efforts to create a work environment where all workers can thrive.

The federal government, as the nation’s largest employer, will update policies and programs to prevent and address sexual harassment and other forms of harassment and discrimination across the federal workforce and our armed services, including supports for survivors. We will also address barriers to reentry into the labor force from the criminal justice system, particularly those barriers that are unique to women, girls, and gender nonconforming people.

Globally, we will work bilaterally and multilaterally to help implement public and private sector policies, laws, and regulations that level the playing field in the workplace by eliminating gender-based restrictions on occupations held and hours worked; spousal consent requirements; unequal inheritance and property ownership laws; and other legal barriers. We will welcome adoption of the International Labor Organization Convention on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, enacted in the wake of the global #MeToo movement to protect workers from harassment in the workplace. We will also address gender gaps in access to productive resources for women in the agricultural labor force, the sector in which two out of three women in the least developed countries are employed.

***c. Strengthen Working Families and the Economy by Investing in Care Infrastructure***

To help rebuild the economy and lower costs for working families, we will invest in our country’s care infrastructure.

We will ensure that families have access to affordable, high-quality child care, cutting costs of child care by more than half for most families. We will also promote universal pre-kindergarten education, giving a head start to our earliest learners and boosting labor force participation, as well as extend and expand tax credits like the Child Tax Credit so that parents can cover everything from buying diapers to putting food on the table to paying the rent or mortgage.

We will support workers and their families by creating a national paid family and medical leave program that is available to parents and caregivers, including chosen family members, and covers a range of needs, such as taking time to bond with a new child; caring for a seriously ill loved one; and healing from a serious illness or injury. We will also increase resources to expand access to quality, affordable home- or community-based care, so that families with aging relatives and people with disabilities can choose the care that meets their needs. And we will invest in our caregiving workforce – who are disproportionately women of color and have been underpaid and undervalued for too long – by creating care jobs with fair pay, dignity, and employment protections.

Globally, to lift millions of women and families out of poverty, the United States will join with allies to strengthen the global care infrastructure. We will leverage our role in multilateral economic institutions to promote government and private sector investment in care, including child, elder, and health care, and universal early childhood education, as well as support programs that expand access to and availability of care. We will work to support protections for the caregiving workforce—including domestic workers, the majority of whom are immigrants and from marginalized communities—to ensure they are adequately paid and protected under labor laws and a living wage. And we will promote reform for workers in the informal economy, whose economic and caregiving needs are too often overlooked in existing care infrastructure.

***d. Promote Financial Inclusion and Close the Gender Wealth Gap***



Women are more likely to live in poverty than men—and significantly more likely to retire in poverty. To give them the opportunity to build, maintain, and pass on wealth, we will address barriers that erode women’s earnings and impair their financial security, such as income inequality, debt burdens, lack of access to financial services, and housing costs, and support the growth of women-led businesses.

We will also work to reform consumer debt collection practices and narrow the retirement wealth gap that endangers women’s economic security later in life. We will invest in financial literacy education and resources that enhance women’s agency. We will aim to improve access to affordable housing and work to eliminate discriminatory practices and policies in lending. We will work to reduce barriers for eligible women and families to access public benefits through administrative reforms to simplify enrollment and increase awareness.

Globally, we will invest in women’s entrepreneurship through our foreign assistance and in partnership with the private sector, including through impact and commercial investment, capacity building for women entrepreneurs, and increased opportunities to participate in trade and access markets. We will also create and promote opportunities to better and more equitably include women-owned businesses in supply chains and contracting, supporting programs that create opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises.

We will also work with governments and financial institutions to close gender gaps in access to banking and financial services, such as credit and insurance, including by increasing access to national identification and supporting financing for digital infrastructure. Furthermore, we will support the collection of sex-disaggregated data, including individual- and household-level asset information, to better understand the ways that women and girls may be excluded within households. And we will work to strengthen women entrepreneurs’ access to digital platforms and technologies.

## **Eliminate Gender-Based Violence**

All people deserve to live free from the threat of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence undermines safety, health, well-being, economic potential, and human rights. In addition to the human cost to individuals across their lifespan, gender-based violence has direct and indirect costs for families, communities, and economies and impacts democratic governance, development, and public health. To prevent and respond to gender-based violence wherever it occurs—whether in people’s homes, schools, workplaces, communities, or online—we must develop and strengthen national and global policies to end the scourge of gender-based violence; support survivors through comprehensive service provision; and increase prevention efforts.

Gender-based violence can take many forms, and it is rooted in structural gender inequalities and power imbalances. It includes the use or threat of physical violence and coercive control toward an intimate partner (including domestic and dating violence), sexual assault, and stalking. Gender-based violence also includes human trafficking, online abuse and harassment, child sexual abuse, and rape during armed conflict, including when used as a tactic of war. And it encompasses physical, sexual, psychological, and financial harm or suffering, threats of such acts, harassment, coercion, and arbitrary deprivation of liberty, in both public and private spaces.

Gender-based violence is endemic in our communities. In the United States, about one in four women and nearly one in ten men reported being impacted by sexual violence, physical violence,



and/or stalking by an intimate partner. Globally, one in three women across their lifetime are subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence from a non-partner.

Gender-based violence poses additional challenges for individuals from marginalized or underserved populations who experience intersecting forms of oppression, such as racism, homophobia, xenophobia, and economic exploitation, which affect their safety, well-being, and their ability to access support. In the United States, Native American women experience gender-based violence at higher rates, often perpetrated by individuals who are not Native American. Black transgender women face epidemic levels of violence, accounting for 66% of all victims of fatal violence against transgender and gender nonconforming people in the United States. Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women and their families face heightened risk of gendered hate crimes, while people with disabilities face higher risks of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking.

As in the United States, women and girls across the world face heightened risk of abuse and exploitation, and these risks are higher for those from underserved and marginalized populations. The risk of gender-based violence is particularly high in conflict zones, where rape is often used as a tactic of war, and in the aftermath of natural disasters, as well as in humanitarian and refugee contexts, where women and girls face unique vulnerabilities.

Intimate partner violence and gun violence are a deadly combination in the United States, where nearly half of all female homicide victims are killed by a current or former male intimate partner and where nonfatal gun use leaves women especially at risk and furthers coercive control. Gender-based violence also has profound effects on the health and economic security of survivors and their families. It impacts women's safety and security in the workplace, especially when they have limited bargaining power and fewer contractual and other rights at work. Furthermore, risks of sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as human trafficking, are higher for low-wage workers, including restaurant and janitorial workers; migrant workers, including farmworkers; and those who work in conditions of isolation, including domestic workers and home health aides.

In addition to the long-term health and economic effects on survivors and their families, gender-based violence imposes significant costs to the economy and society overall, including costs related to health care, criminal justice, and lost productivity.

As a result of the courage and advocacy of survivors, who have led the way in movements for social change both in the United States and globally, important progress has been made over the past several decades to raise awareness and advance policies to address gender-based violence. However, greater focus is needed to address the scale of this challenge and combat its deleterious effects on health, safety, development, and economic growth, as well as the stability and security of countries around the world.



To reduce gender-based violence at home and abroad, we will:

*a. Develop and Strengthen Comprehensive Policies to End Gender-Based Violence*

The United States will create the first-ever U.S. National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, establishing a comprehensive plan to prevent and address the root causes of these problems, as well as increase options and opportunities for survivors to seek safety, support, healing, and justice. This plan will have a particular focus on addressing the compounded systemic barriers of those most at risk, including women, girls, people of color, Indigenous people, immigrants, individuals with disabilities, older adults, individuals experiencing poverty, LGBTQI+ individuals, and members of other underserved communities.

To ensure a holistic approach for all survivors, we will work to reauthorize, strengthen, and improve implementation of federal legislation and policies to address gender-based violence. This includes the reauthorization and strengthening of the landmark Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which has strengthened legal protections and civil remedies for survivors and has continued to expand protections and programs, particularly for those in underserved communities who face additional barriers to safety and justice. More reforms are necessary, through legislation and regulations, to ensure that survivors have a full range of options when seeking a pathway to safety, healing, and well-being, including increased access to essential services; effective criminal, civil, immigration, and restorative justice systems; implementation and expansion of common sense gun legislation to keep firearms out of the hands of adjudicated abusers; access to economic security and safe and affordable housing and transportation; adequate health care, mental health, and social services; and increased support for holistic prevention efforts.

We will aim to improve prevention initiatives and enhance trauma-informed responses domestically and globally to assist children and adolescents affected by sexual violence, as well as adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, and expand access to healing and justice. Furthermore, we will improve policies to prevent and address sexual harassment, assault, and exploitation in the workplace and in educational settings, including by strengthening prevention and protections for the federal workforce and the military.

To address online abuse and harassment, domestically and globally, we will convene a U.S. Government task force and seek input from leading experts to produce recommendations for preventing and improving the response to technology-facilitated gender-based violence. These efforts will include a focus on addressing cyber stalking, the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, and the use of the internet as a tool of abuse to intimidate and silence women, including women politicians, journalists, and activists.

Globally, we will update and expand our 2016 U.S. Strategy to Prevent Gender-Based Violence Globally to address heightened challenges, including the rise in gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will also amplify efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in conflict and crisis and in humanitarian contexts by better integrating prevention efforts and service provision into our standard humanitarian response, and bolstering accountability mechanisms for those responsible for gender-based violence. We will direct our resources to programs that are trauma-informed and survivor-centered and address the link between gender-based violence and political instability. We will also support the passage and implementation of stronger national laws and policies and international frameworks through our



bilateral and multilateral engagement. And we will elevate a focus on gender-based violence in our defense, diplomacy, and foreign assistance efforts.

***b. Address Gender-Based Violence through Comprehensive Service Provision***

To help close gaps in gender-based violence prevention and response efforts, including for members of underserved communities, we will seek to address the multifaceted and systemic barriers survivors face, including the need for economic security, safe and affordable housing, safe schools and workplaces, access to transportation, physical and mental health services, and legal representation.

We will work to improve the response of law enforcement and the criminal and civil legal system, as well as the immigration system, to ensure widespread knowledge of crime victims' rights, and address the harms that some survivors experience as a result of violence or discrimination by those with an obligation to protect or when seeking support from these systems. To expand options for survivors, we will support the development of restorative justice and other alternatives to a criminal justice system response that are survivor-centered and trauma informed. We will also increase support for diverse service providers, including culturally-specific community-based organizations, particularly those providing support for survivors from historically marginalized and underserved communities.

Globally, we will strengthen efforts to provide shelter, legal assistance, health care, including mental health care, livelihood training, and financial support for survivors of gender-based violence. We will also increase efforts to ensure that women are protected from violence and abuse in the workplace. To address heightened vulnerability to gender-based violence in crisis situations, we will ensure that comprehensive services are better integrated into disaster preparedness, humanitarian contexts, and conflict and post-conflict response, and work to expand bilateral and multilateral initiatives to provide such services to survivors from the onset of a crisis.

***c. Increase Prevention Efforts to Reduce the Incidence of Gender-Based Violence***

Abuse is preventable. Both at home and abroad, we will aim to evaluate and scale programs by promoting a wide range of culturally-relevant and trauma-informed programs that prevent gender-based violence. We will increase support for education for all students about safety, consent, and healthy relationships, including efforts to prevent online abuse and harassment. In the United States we will strengthen the enforcement of laws—such as Title IX, which prohibits sex discrimination in education, and the Clery Act, which requires disclosure of campus sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking—to improve prevention and response policies at K-12 schools and institutions of higher education. We will also improve legislation and funding, such as through the reauthorization of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, to expand prevention initiatives. Furthermore, we will promote increased investment in research efforts focused on prevention, which are necessary to better understand root causes, create innovative models, and increase data collection and analysis to evaluate promising practices, including identifying and supporting approaches led by and focused on diverse populations. Additionally, we will incorporate lessons learned and best practices in responding to pandemics or natural disasters in order to reduce heightened risks of gender-based violence.

In the United States and globally, we will address social mores that normalize abusive behaviors and engage a broad array of partners in prevention efforts, including through programs that



engage men and boys to prevent gender-based violence. These efforts include undertaking research and evaluation to improve the development of holistic programs that aim to prevent further use of violence and increase accountability, as well as supporting trauma-informed approaches for those who have witnessed or experienced violence as children.

## **Protect, Improve, and Expand Access to Health Care, including Sexual and Reproductive Health Care**

Health care is a right—not a privilege. All people deserve access to high-quality, affordable health care, regardless of their zip code, income, ethnicity, race, or any other factor. We will ensure equitable access to high-quality, affordable health care; protect the constitutional right to safe and legal abortion established in *Roe v. Wade* in the United States, while promoting access to sexual and reproductive health and rights both at home and abroad; close disparities in maternal health care and reduce maternal mortality; and provide comprehensive health care, including preventive and mental health and treatment services.

We are committed to building on the historic work of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to advance women’s and girls’ health in the United States. The ACA has helped ensure fair access to comprehensive and affordable health coverage for millions of women and girls by ensuring more low-income women are eligible for no- or low-cost services through Medicaid; improving affordability and strengthening consumer protections, so that women with preexisting conditions are no longer denied or priced out of coverage; requiring coverage for essential benefits like contraception, cancer screenings, and maternity care; and, most importantly, ensuring that women are no longer discriminated against just for being women. Thanks to the ACA’s coverage expansions, the uninsured rate for all women has dropped by 8 percentage points, with Black and Latina women seeing bigger drops at 10 and 17 percentage points, respectively. The ACA has also made coverage more affordable: fewer Black women, Latinas, as well as young women of all races, report delaying care as a result of cost.

We have expanded the ACA with the most substantial improvement in health care affordability since 2010 by temporarily lowering the cost of ACA Marketplace coverage and enabling nearly three million people to gain coverage. Over half of those who newly signed up for HealthCare.gov coverage during the Administration’s 2021 Special Enrollment Period were women.

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has strained health systems across the world, resulting in a redirection of health resources to cope with the pandemic. Consequently, this crisis has reversed some recent health improvements and created new needs in maternal, neonatal, and child health, as well as sexual and reproductive health. Even before the pandemic, gaps in health systems and service provision undermined access to health care, including for conditions disproportionately faced by women and girls.

As part of expanding access to health care, we must protect and strengthen access to reproductive health care. Reproductive health and rights in the United States are under attack, in spite of the Supreme Court’s recognition of the constitutional right to abortion in *Roe v. Wade* nearly fifty years ago. Over the past several decades, women in the United States have faced a growing number of obstacles to and restrictions on reproductive health care, including safe and legal abortion, which have disproportionately affected and harmed women of color and others in



underserved and historically marginalized communities. Most recently, Texas passed a state law that blatantly violates women’s constitutional rights, as recognized under *Roe v. Wade* and upheld as precedent for nearly five decades, thereby eviscerating access to abortion in our nation’s second largest state and threatening reproductive rights across the country. The Supreme Court is already poised this term to hear the greatest challenge to *Roe* in a generation, putting women’s fundamental rights on the line.

Protecting and expanding access to health care also includes addressing the maternal mortality crisis at home and abroad. The United States has one of the highest maternal mortality rates relative to other developed nations, particularly among Black and Native American women, who are two to three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than non-Hispanic white women, regardless of education level. Globally, even prior to the pandemic, more than 200 million women lacked access to modern methods of family planning, and access to sexual and reproductive health services has declined further during the COVID-19 outbreak. And while the global maternal mortality rate has fallen, almost 300,000 women and girls still die each year from largely preventable conditions related to pregnancy and childbirth; indeed, pregnancy and childbirth complications remain a leading cause of death among girls aged 15 to 19 years old.

The mental health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have also exacerbated pre-existing disparities. In the United States, the rate of visits of teenage girls to emergency rooms for self-harm, including suicide attempts, has risen 51%, and students who are most at risk of trauma related to the COVID-19 pandemic—disproportionately students of color—are more likely to be in schools that lack comprehensive mental health services. Social media, bullying, sexual harassment and abuse, and domestic violence also impact mental health, which in turn undermines physical health, behavioral health, physical health, and the educational prospects of those disproportionately affected, including girls, young women, and LGBTQI+ youth at home and abroad.

To expand access to health care and address pervasive health inequities, we will:

***a. Ensure Equitable Access to High-Quality, Affordable Health Care***

Access to health care is essential for the full participation of women and girls in the economy and society. We are committed to protecting and building on the successes of the ACA to expand access, lower costs, and ensure that quality, affordable health care is available to all. This includes closing the Medicaid coverage gap so low-income women can get and stay covered, lowering health insurance premiums for ACA coverage, improving access to dental, hearing, and vision coverage for older adults, and taking concrete steps to lower prescription drug costs. We also need to invest in research and innovation, focus on closing stark and long-standing inequities that women, particularly women of color, face, and address the systemic racism that has allowed many of these inequities to persist.

We will also address systemic bias and racism in health care provision. These efforts include robust implementation of Section 1557 of the ACA, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), race, national origin, disability, or age in various health programs or activities that receive federal funds.

Globally, we remain committed to expanding access to care for women, girls, and other underserved communities around the world. We will continue to promote equitable access to



health care through continued investments in the provision of health services, especially for underserved populations. This includes ensuring that COVID-19 prevention and treatment reaches women, girls, and other vulnerable and marginalized groups. It also includes health systems strengthening in order to support the provision of appropriate and adequate care for people of all genders.

In our global health work, we will also address sociocultural factors that compromise access to care for women and girls, rendering them more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, unattended births, and other poor health outcomes—including by engaging men and boys as partners in addressing gender inequities in health. And we will work with host and donor governments to advance the critical role of women in the global health workforce, especially in light of their disproportionate contributions during COVID-19, and address the barriers they face to career advancement, including pay inequity, harassment, and other factors.

***b. Protect and Defend the Constitutional Right in *Roe v. Wade* and Promote Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights***

Sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice in the United States are under grave attack. We will use all available levers to protect these rights, and we will work to codify the constitutional rights recognized under *Roe v. Wade* for nearly half a century. To secure access to high-quality reproductive health care, we will seek to break down discriminatory barriers that inhibit reproductive freedom, such as those based on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, income, disability, geography, and other factors. That includes supporting the repeal of the Hyde Amendment, because health care should not depend on a person's income or zip code. We will strengthen access to the full range of family planning services by restoring and expanding the Title X program, our nation's only family planning program. We will also strengthen people's ability to receive the high-quality, comprehensive care they need from the reproductive health care provider of their choice, regardless of the health care program. Furthermore, we will support medically-accurate, inclusive, age-appropriate sex education, including to prevent sexually transmitted infections. These efforts will reduce teen and unintended pregnancies, improve maternal and infant health outcomes, and reduce the rate of sexually transmitted infectious diseases. At home and abroad, we will explore ways to increase access to affordable and safe hygiene products, which are financially out of reach to many, especially girls.

Globally, we will seek to end the harmful Global Gag Rule that restricts women's access to critical health information and services. We are proud to remain the largest bilateral donor to global family planning assistance, a commitment spanning more than five decades, and we commit to investing in high-quality, client-centered sexual and reproductive health services that improve women's wellbeing, promote gender equality, and give women greater control over their bodies and lives. We will continue to support the United Nations Population Fund, which provides vital family planning and maternal health services around the world. We will also ensure better integration of sexual and reproductive health service provision in global contexts, including in humanitarian and post-conflict settings. Furthermore, we will restore U.S. global leadership on sexual and reproductive rights and comprehensive sex education, in bilateral and multilateral fora and in efforts to advance universal health care coverage globally.

***c. Close Disparities in Maternal Health Care and Reduce Maternal Mortality***

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, no one in the United States should die due to preventable conditions related to pregnancy and childbirth. To address our nation's maternal health crisis, we will take a whole-



of-government approach to cutting the maternal mortality and morbidity rates, closing racial disparities, and addressing the systemic racism that has allowed these inequities to exist in maternal care and outcomes. Our maternal health strategy will advance the expansion of Medicaid post-partum coverage to a full year, invest in rural maternal health efforts, and tackle health disparities head on, including through better data collection and reporting, improved training for providers (including implicit bias training), and diversifying the perinatal workforce.

Globally, we will continue investments to advance the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's, and Adolescents' Health. This includes a commitment to invest in safe, respectful, and client-centered maternal and child health services to address the major causes of maternal mortality and morbidity, with a focus on countries that account for more than two-thirds of maternal and child deaths worldwide, including conflict- and crisis-affected settings. We will also strengthen health systems to ensure that all births are attended by health professionals who have access to basic emergency obstetric care and ensure that all women and girls have access to high-quality, integrated sexual and reproductive health services.

***d. Provide Comprehensive Health Services, Including Preventive Services and Mental Health***

We will ensure that people of all genders get comprehensive services in order to stay healthy. This includes preventive services, ranging from cholesterol and blood pressure screenings to mammograms and cervical cancer screenings, among others. We are also committed to expanding health insurance coverage so more people have access to mental health services; enforcement of mental health parity laws; and access to providers who can provide compassionate, trauma-informed, culturally competent services. To address the rise in youth mental health issues during the pandemic, we will seek to double the number of mental health professionals in our schools, prioritizing expanding services in high-poverty schools. We will also invest in maternal mental health care and substance use disorder prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery support. This includes addressing gaps in access to postpartum mental health and substance use care for women of color and rural women, among others.

To ensure comprehensive care for women, we need to reduce health disparities in research, prevention, and treatment of diseases historically associated with women—such as breast and cervical cancer—as well as other health issues that are leading causes of death for women but often overlooked, such as heart disease and stroke. This includes investing in research that explores the specific needs of women of color and the social determinants of health that often contribute to racial, ethnic, and other disparities, such as those that make Black women disproportionately impacted by uterine fibroids, more likely to die of breast cancer, more susceptible to heart disease than white women, and more likely to be diagnosed with HIV; and that lead to higher rates of gestational diabetes for Latinas, who are also 17 times more likely to die from diabetes than non-Hispanic white women.

Across the world, we will support integrated health services through our global health programs—including comprehensive women's health care services—and promote co-location of services to improve health outcomes. We will also work with partners and allies to advance the provision of culturally sensitive, trauma-informed, comprehensive health services, including for mental health and wellness, particularly in the wake of COVID-19. This includes focusing on the social determinants of health that fuel disparities in underserved and marginalized communities.



## Ensure Equal Opportunity and Equity in Education

Access to quality education is fundamental to gender equity and equality. Yet here at home and around the world, too many people continue to face barriers to education that undermine their full potential and ability to compete on a level playing field, which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. We will promote equitable access to education from early childhood through employment; enact reforms to eliminate discriminatory practices and other barriers; and strengthen Title IX protections and other policies governing the response to gender-based violence, assault, and sexual harassment in education.

In the United States, girls—particularly girls of color, girls who are English Learners, girls with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ youth—face unique challenges in school. For example, Black girls experience disproportionate rates of school discipline—often for discriminatory dress-code and hair violations—and criminalization. Black girls and other girls of color, girls with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ youth are overrepresented in school-based arrests that foster a school-to-prison pipeline, among other harmful outcomes.

While women have made substantial progress in rates of enrollment in postsecondary education and represent a majority of college students, they hold two-thirds of the nation’s student debt, with Black women holding a disproportionate share of this debt. Furthermore, women and girls still do not enjoy equal opportunity and resources in education and leadership, including in athletics, and their access is further constrained by sexual assault and harassment, and other forms of gender-based violence.

Globally, over 132 million girls are out of school, and a persistent gender gap in secondary education leaves girls without basic literacy and numeracy skills, at risk of child, early, and forced marriage, and with limited economic opportunities. Additionally, girls and young women experience high rates of sexual abuse and sexual harassment in educational settings or on their way to school, often perpetrated with impunity by peers as well as by educators and those in other positions of authority. Concerns about safety, harassment and abuse, menstrual hygiene, and unintended pregnancy undermine access to education, and girls in conflict and humanitarian situations are 2.5 times more likely than boys to be out of school. Even when girls are in school, the quality of schooling is often insufficient to impart basic literacy and numeracy skills. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these gaps, disrupting schooling for an entire generation of girls, who are more likely than boys to have been forced out of school, lacked access to remote learning options, and taken on caregiving responsibilities.

Closing gender gaps in education is critical to boosting health, economic growth, and stability at home and abroad. To further this imperative, we will:

### *a. Promote Equitable Access to Education from Early Childhood through Employment*

We will promote equitable access to quality educational opportunities, from early childhood education through job training and employment. We will pursue high-quality preschool for three- and four-year-olds to ensure that children of every background are entitled to the strongest possible start. We will also invest in making college affordable for low- and middle-income students, including at community colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and minority-serving institutions, which will help close gender, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic opportunity gaps.



To promote equity in education in the United States—particularly in our public school system where 53% of students are students of color—we will make historic investments in high-poverty Title I schools to close gaps in access to rigorous coursework, increase educator compensation, and provide incentives for states to address inequitable school funding systems; strengthen pipelines for underrepresented educators to improve the diversity of the workforce; and expand college and career pathways for middle and high school students. We will also work towards our goal of doubling the number of school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and nurses and expanding federal funding for community schools that provide wraparound supports for students and their families.

We will provide opportunities to pursue STEM careers and develop pathways to access training and career opportunities. We will also address the ways in which the lack of affordable housing and transportation creates barriers to quality education.

Globally, we will work with partners and allies to promote early childhood development and universal pre-primary education. We will prioritize efforts to close gender gaps in secondary education, ensuring that girls gain core literacy and numeracy skills in school, which will in turn advance health and economic development around the world. We will also promote workforce development, mentorship, job training, and foundational leadership skills for women and girls.

***b. Enact Reforms to Eliminate Discriminatory Practices and Other Barriers in Education***

We will support school discipline reform at all levels of education to promote safe, inclusive, and trauma-informed learning environments for all students, including Black girls and other girls of color, girls with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ youth. This includes collecting comprehensive, disaggregated data on school disciplinary outcomes across the United States and highlighting best practices for implementing trauma-informed, culturally-responsive approaches to school discipline. We will also work to fund evidence-based approaches to meet the social, emotional, academic, and career needs of students of all genders and identities, including culturally-responsive counseling and mental health services.

Globally, we will support initiatives that incentivize girls' and women's access to learning and disincentivize child, early, and forced marriage, including safe learning environments, increased representation of women in educational leadership roles, implementation of strategies to mitigate financial barriers, school-based health and nutritional support, and behavior change communication programs. We will address school-related gender-based violence and leverage our multilateral investments to advance girls' secondary education, including in conflict, crisis, and humanitarian contexts, and address barriers such as cost, distance, and poor-quality education. We will also ensure that COVID-19 relief strategies address these persistent barriers to girls' education, including unpaid work.

***c. Strengthen Title IX Protections and Policies Governing Response to Gender-Based Violence, Assault, and Sexual Harassment***

To promote equity and equal opportunity in education, we will support policies that ensure an educational environment free from discrimination—including sexual harassment and abuse—on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

In the United States, we will continue to review and strengthen regulations and guidance implementing the Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities, including in the form of



gender-based and sexual harassment. This includes ensuring that women and girls are not discriminated against in accessing educational opportunities, from admissions and financial aid to leadership opportunities and sports. We have also already taken swift action to extend those protections to LGBTQI+ students, in keeping with the Supreme Court’s decision in *Bostock v. Clayton*. We will promote equitable access to sports and school facilities for all student athletes; support athletics participation by girls, who currently participate at much lower levels than boys in elementary and secondary school sports; and promote respect for the gender identity of all students, faculty, and staff.

We will improve the response to sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other gender-based violence in early childhood, K-12, and postsecondary education, including supporting trauma-informed training for school employees to reduce re-victimizing students during the response process. We will strengthen enforcement of the Clery Act, which requires disclosure of campus sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking. We will also support educational programs for students, faculty, and administrators on sexual harassment, assault, and consent, including bystander intervention training and other prevention initiatives.

Globally, we will work with governments and multilateral partners to encourage reform to laws and policies governing sexual harassment and abuse in education, improve the safety of transportation to and from schools, and invest in global and local women’s organizations working to reduce barriers to girls’ education, including sexual harassment and abuse.

## Promote Gender Equity and Fairness in Justice and Immigration Systems

Fair treatment in justice systems and immigration systems is essential to advancing gender equity and equality. However, the unique needs of women, girls and gender nonconforming people are frequently overlooked in both systems.

Women and girls from underserved populations remain overrepresented in our criminal and juvenile justice systems: 62% of incarcerated or confined girls are girls of color, over half of whom are Black girls. Forty percent of detained girls nationally identify as lesbian, bisexual, questioning, gender nonconforming, or transgender. Women and girls who are sexually assaulted too often lack adequate redress and often are retraumatized when seeking help from criminal justice systems. Women and girls of color—particularly Black women and girls—also represent a disproportionate share of police arrests and police violence. And the disproportionate incarceration of Black, Latino, and American Indian/Alaskan Native men and boys exacerbates trauma, economic insecurity, and other inequities in communities of color.

Immigrant women also deserve access to justice, both in our immigration systems and in our justice systems, where they face additional obstacles to accessing safety and security. They are also significantly less likely to have health insurance coverage, and women in detention can face major barriers to accessing health care, including sexual and reproductive care.

To advance justice for women, girls, and gender nonconforming people, we will:

*a. Ensure Fair Treatment for Women and Girls in Justice Systems*

To build safe, healthy, and whole families and communities, we will work to reform our criminal justice system, including by reducing the number of people incarcerated in the United States and



addressing the racial, gender, and income-based disparities in the justice system, as well as supporting efforts to increase community trust in police. We are also committed to increasing federal oversight and accountability for police departments and prosecutors' offices to address systemic misconduct, including gender bias and sexual misconduct. And we will work to end cash bail and reform our pretrial system, recognizing the harm these processes cause, particularly for Black women and families.

We will expand trauma-informed social services for women and girls in the criminal and juvenile justice systems who are struggling to cope with trauma, substance use disorders, and behavioral health disorders. We will ensure that incarcerated women, girls, LGBTQI+ individuals, and those formerly incarcerated receive health care, education and training, jobs, housing and other supports to reduce reincarceration and help them successfully rejoin society. We will also support programs and incentives to reduce the incarcerated youth population by promoting community-based alternatives to incarceration such as mentorship, counseling, and jobs.

We will reduce vulnerabilities to abuse and exploitation by strengthening services for girls and gender nonconforming youth in the child welfare system and support their transition to independence. Furthermore, we will provide access to legal services and assist victims of gender-based violence and human trafficking whose non-violent convictions resulted from their victimization.

Globally, we will promote fair, equitable, and inclusive justice systems. We will strive to increase women's access to justice, including redress and protection related to gender-based violence and access to legal representation. We will work with partners and allies to encourage reform of discriminatory standards across justice systems, including gender bias in law enforcement. And we will work with post-conflict nations to ensure that transitional justice systems address gender equality issues and promote accountability for crimes against women and girls.

***b. Advance Gender Equity in the Immigration System***

We will work to support a fair and humane immigration system in the United States that welcomes immigrants, keeps families together, and allows people—both newly arrived and those who have lived here for generations—to more fully participate in our country. We will enact policies to reduce vulnerability to abuse and exploitation faced by immigrants and noncitizens, especially women, girls and LGBTQI+ individuals, and increase their ability to seek safety and justice. We will support improved pathways to safety, including asylum and humanitarian relief, for those fleeing persecution, including as appropriate, on the basis of membership in a gender-based group—such as victims of gender-based violence—consistent with our international obligations, with a particular focus on crisis contexts. We will also seek timely adjudication of immigration petitions for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, and other crimes.

We will seek to eliminate barriers that prevent immigrants from accessing government-funded services or obtaining the assistance of law enforcement, and will advance the language access rights of individuals with limited English proficiency. We will promote education programs so that immigrant populations are aware of their rights, including labor rights and protections, to reduce vulnerability to exploitation. We will also support humane and trauma-informed practices at the U.S. border and promote alternatives to detention, including for vulnerable



populations—particularly for those who are LGBTQI+ and individuals who are pregnant, postpartum, or nursing.

## **Advance Human Rights and Gender Equality Under the Law**

In 1995, the United States led a historic delegation to the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, where then-First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton declared that “women’s rights are human rights.” Just over 25 years later, our efforts to restore and strengthen American leadership on women’s human rights globally are an extension of our commitment to advance human rights and gender equality here at home. We will promote gender equality under the law; prevent and address human rights violations and abuses; and combat human trafficking.

Gender equity and equality under the law at home and across the globe is a precondition to women’s full participation in economic, political, social and cultural life. While the United States has laws to prevent violations of civil rights, women, girls and LGBTQI+ people still face discrimination, and the U.S. Constitution lacks language expressly enshrining equal rights regardless of gender. Globally, 100 nations still have laws on the books that inhibit women’s workplace participation, freedom of movement, and equality, and in too many countries discrimination against women and girls is legal. Fewer than half of countries worldwide have laws prohibiting gender discrimination in compensation, and 58% of countries lack laws that explicitly criminalize marital rape. On average, women around the world are entitled to only three quarters of the rights that men enjoy—and in many nations, far less than that.

Additionally, human rights abuses against women and girls persist at home and abroad, undermining security across the globe. Millions of women and girls remain at risk of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and child, early and forced marriage, forms of gender-based violence that undermine security and human rights, including here in the United States. Other violations of women’s human rights and abuses—from the right to travel freely to the opportunity to attend school—are linked to instability of entire nations. And human rights violations and abuses against particular populations—such as the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous people, fueled in part by high rates of violence against Indigenous women and girls—undermine the safety and dignity of marginalized communities and detract from overall security and the rule of law.

Furthermore, human trafficking—a major security, human rights, and civil rights issue—fuels criminal networks and affects some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Every year, millions of women, men, LGBTQI+ individuals, and children, particularly homeless youth and children in the welfare system, endure suffering at the hands of human traffickers who exploit them for compelled labor, services, or commercial sex, depriving them of their rights and freedoms. Human trafficking undermines civil rights, national security, and the rule of law at home and abroad. Though human trafficking is known to be significantly underreported, 11,500 situations of human trafficking were identified in the United States in 2019, while of the estimated 25 million victims of human trafficking globally, nearly three quarters are women and girls.

To advance human rights and gender equality under the law, we will:



***a. Promote Gender Equality Under the Law***

To promote the civil rights and full participation of women across economic, political, and social life, we will pursue reform to secure full gender equality under the law. Domestically, we will continue to support legislation that would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in employment, housing, and public accommodations, among other sectors. We will also continue to support the Equal Rights Amendment, which would make gender equality explicit in the U.S. Constitution, as well as the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, a critical tool to advance women’s rights around the world.

Globally, we will marshal diplomacy and foreign assistance to promote reform of national and sub-national laws that discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity, including in the areas of work, property ownership and inheritance, freedom of movement, family law, and health care, among others. This includes supporting country-level reforms that ensure equal rights and opportunities under the law for women and girls.

***b. Prevent and Address Human Rights Violations***

We have already taken steps to demonstrate renewed U.S. leadership in support of gender equality and human rights on the world stage. At the United Nations Generation Equality Forum, Vice President Harris announced an historic U.S. commitment of over \$12 billion dollars to advance gender equality here at home and across the globe. We will continue to elevate a focus on gender equality and human rights in domestic and foreign policy.

In the United States, we will collaborate with state officials to prevent and address harmful practices that undermine human rights, including laws that permit child, early and forced marriage, as well as the practice of FGM/C among diaspora communities, and ensure access to social services for those harmed. We will also combat human rights violations and abuses against underserved groups, including by addressing the scourge of missing and murdered Indigenous people. This includes preventing and addressing sexual violence, human trafficking, domestic violence, violent crime, systemic racism, and economic disparities, among other factors, and supporting increased resources and programs for Tribal communities to prevent and address gender-based violence and other harms. And we will work to advance the rights of and protections for Indigenous women and girls globally, including through the Trilateral Working Group on Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls in coordination with Mexico and Canada.

Around the world, we will work with a broad array of leaders to promote programs that address harmful practices that undermine human rights, health, and economic growth, including child, early and forced marriage, and FGM/C, among other practices. We will also address the constellation of human rights violations and abuses—including those restrictions on work, education, and freedom of movement, as well as attacks on political leaders—that constrain opportunities for women and girls. This work will include marshalling our diplomacy to support legal reform and providing foreign assistance to support a wide array of objectives, including behavior change educational programs; economic empowerment programs for women and girls; and supporting documentation of, and advocacy against, violence and human rights violations and abuses targeting women, girls and marginalized populations. We will also collaborate to address these issues in multilateral fora and on the world stage.



### *c. Combat Human Trafficking*

To combat human trafficking at home and abroad, we will implement the U.S. National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking; fund domestic and international anti-trafficking programs focused on prevention, protection, and prosecution; and work with partners to uphold national and global anti-trafficking standards.

Human trafficking disproportionately affects women and girls, people of color, LGBTQI+ individuals, persons with disabilities, vulnerable migrants, and other underserved individuals. Thus, our commitment to combating human trafficking is intertwined with our commitment to advancing equity, with a particular focus on members of underserved communities who are adversely impacted by gender, racial and ethnic discrimination and bias, and other disparities that increase their vulnerability to exploitation, abuse, and human trafficking. Accordingly, we will strengthen implementation of the U.S. National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking.

We will also strengthen implementation of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act and amplify efforts to identify trafficking victims, provide survivor services, and apprehend and prosecute human traffickers within our borders and around the world, including increasing efforts to combat transnational human trafficking networks. We will take steps to increase accountability in the private sector to ensure supply chains free from forced labor and incentivize the financial sector to take action to help identify and seize illegal profits. We will amplify prevention efforts through sustainable development programs that address the root causes of and vulnerability to human trafficking and address the criminalization of victims of trafficking—disproportionately women and girls of color—in our justice system.

We will work across the federal government to renew and strengthen efforts to improve protections against trafficking in persons through federal contracting and grant assistance. We will implement trauma-informed training programs for workers, such as transit and train workers who disproportionately interact with trafficking victims, as well as educators, to be able to better identify trafficking victims for help and support. And we will support the development of data and research to identify the communities and geographic regions where trafficking occurs to better target our enforcement and prevention efforts.

## **Elevate Gender Equality in Security and Humanitarian Relief**

A growing body of evidence confirms that the status of women is correlated with the security of nations—and countries that violate women’s and girls’ rights are more likely to be unstable. In addition, research shows that women’s inclusion in matters of peace and security advances stability. To elevate gender equality in security and humanitarian relief efforts, we will: promote gender parity and gender equality issues in security processes; ensure gender equity in humanitarian relief and refugee resettlement efforts; and include gender in efforts to prevent terrorism.

Women’s involvement in military and police forces improves efficacy and force readiness, while their participation in peace negotiations makes it more likely that warring parties will reach sustainable agreements. Despite these clear benefits, women and women’s rights issues are consistently excluded from peace processes and the security sector, with women constituting on



average only six percent of mediators and signatories in major peace negotiations over the last 30 years.

Too often, the security sector overlooks the challenges faced by women, girls, and gender nonconforming people. In the United States, there is much work to be done in our military to ensure the representation of women and LGBTQI+ individuals, and prevent and address sexual violence and discrimination. Strategies to prevent terrorism overlook the role of women as perpetrators, mitigators, and victims, even as extremist groups recruit women and benefit from their subjugation across the globe, and despite the link between misogyny and domestic extremism. Across conflict and crisis affected contexts, protection for women human rights defenders, whose participation is critical to stability and security, is too often overlooked.

Furthermore, humanitarian relief efforts continue to overlook the needs of women and girls, including protection from gender-based violence and equitable access to services. In addition, women-led organizations are too often excluded from humanitarian decision-making and response.

In regions across the world, we can see both the consequences that violations and abuses of women's rights have had on women and society at large, as well as the need for their inclusion in peace and security processes. Rectifying the exclusion of women and girls in peace and security efforts is not only a matter of fairness—it is a strategic imperative that will improve stability both at home and abroad. To increase our safety and elevate gender equality in the peace, security, and humanitarian sectors, we will:

***a. Promote Gender Parity and Gender Equality Issues in Security Processes***

To strengthen peace and security efforts in the United States, we will enact reforms to improve gender integration in the uniformed services and foster the recruitment, promotion, and retention of women, which is a critical step for force readiness, military effectiveness, and national security. This includes removing the prosecution of sexual assault, and the investigation of sexual harassment, from the chain of command, as well as creating specialized units to handle these cases and related crimes. We are also committed to improving prevention and response programs to support survivors, and fully realizing a military climate of dignity and respect. We will promote reforms to ensure equal opportunity and anti-discrimination in the military, including through promotion of a diverse pool of candidates for senior leadership, equitable workplace policies, and comprehensive support services for women veterans.

Globally, we will amplify our whole-of-government implementation of the U.S. Women, Peace, and Security Act. This strategy focuses internally on dedicated staffing, funding, training, and accountability requirements, as well as on policies and programs to advance women's meaningful participation and leadership in conflict prevention, peace, security, and political processes. We will use our diplomacy and leverage in bilateral and multilateral fora to promote inclusive diplomacy, foreign assistance, inclusive security processes and the prioritization of women's rights issues in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. We will support the leadership of local women-led civil society organizations working to advance more inclusive peace and security agendas.

***b. Ensure Gender Equity in Humanitarian Relief and Refugee Resettlement Efforts***

We will continue to work with and support other governments, multilateral partners, and nongovernmental organizations to advance gender equity in humanitarian relief and the



protection of women and girls in emergencies. We will also strengthen our humanitarian response by amplifying our focus on gender equality, leveraging our role as the largest bilateral humanitarian donor to help ensure progress and accountability on these issues across the humanitarian system. This includes ensuring prevention and response to gender-based violence at the outset of an emergency, including harmful practices like child marriage; the provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services; access to girls' education, which is threatened in emergency situations; and women's access to safe and accessible livelihood opportunities. We will support the critical role of women-led organizations as first responders and to inform the policies and programs of the humanitarian system. We will also ensure that our refugee resettlement processes respond to the unique needs of and offer comprehensive services to women and girls.

*c. Include Gender in Efforts to Counter Violent Extremism*

To strengthen efforts to prevent terrorism and targeted violence at home and abroad, we will include women in prevention efforts, recognizing that women are well-positioned to lead efforts to spot and address radicalization and mobilization to such violence in their communities. We will also address the rising role of women in violent extremist activity, both as perpetrators and as victims. To better gather information about women and violent extremism, the Director of National Intelligence will designate a National Intelligence Officer for Gender Equality, who, among other responsibilities, will help analyze the interrelationship between gender and violent extremism. We will also increase the recruitment of women in the security sector to strengthen our efforts to mitigate against terrorist threats at home and abroad.

## **Promote Gender Equity in Mitigating and Responding to Climate Change**

Tackling the climate crisis requires ambition, innovation, and broad mobilization and will depend on the commitment and participation of all people. But gender-based discrimination and exclusion in climate policy decision-making at all levels of government currently inhibit progress on a full range of solutions to address climate change and associated threats, such as extreme weather and disasters, natural resource depletion, and growing instability that puts the homes, livelihoods, and security of millions of people at risk. To promote gender equity in mitigating and responding to climate change, we will pursue gender parity in climate negotiations and climate science; support an inclusive clean energy economy; and address gendered public health effects related to climate change.

Climate change presents unique threats to women, girls, and other underserved populations. The health impact of climate change includes increased risks posed by extreme heat, air pollution, and infectious disease exposure, with disproportionate impacts on pregnant women. These effects can be more acute for Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, who are more likely to live in communities where legacies of pollution and underinvestment have created health disparities compounded by climate change. In many contexts, women and girls are also disproportionately harmed by food insecurity, water scarcity, and extreme weather and disasters, the frequency and intensity of which are exacerbated by climate change. Climate-related disasters hinder access to essential services, including sexual and reproductive health care, and women are less likely to have pre-disaster emergency savings compared to men. Left



unchecked, climate change would also further entrench global patterns of inequality: resource competition and forced migration are linked to increased rates of gender-based violence, and economic and social upheaval can hinder progress on human rights.

Although women and girls have been some of the most vocal advocates in support of environmental stewardship, they remain dramatically underrepresented in leadership positions in climate change negotiations in the United States and across the globe. Women and girls are often on the frontlines of climate adaptation, responding to changing conditions that affect food production, water availability, and household safety. Climate change mitigation also requires their increased participation to decarbonize every sector of our economy and foster more sustainable societies.

To meet this challenge, people of all genders must be fully empowered as leaders in government, the private sector, and civil society, as well as community and household decision-makers who can promote sustainable food, transportation, energy, and procurement choices. They should play critical leadership roles in advancing climate goals at all levels of government, including by conducting environmental and climate science, incorporating Indigenous and traditional knowledge into climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, leading climate-linked disaster response, preserving biodiversity, and advancing environmental conservation efforts.

To further this imperative, we will:

***a. Pursue Gender Parity in Climate Negotiations and Climate Science***

Both in the United States and on the world stage, we will seek to increase diverse representation in climate negotiations, diplomacy, policymaking, and the climate science field, working towards the goal of gender parity.

As part of promoting women and girls' education and training in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, we will include a focus on climate science, helping to ensure a deep and diverse bench of experts to achieve gender parity in the climate science community and to develop gender-responsive climate change planning and policy, ecological health strategies, and conservation strategies. We will also support broadening women's inclusion in the development of their communities' environmental protection plans and climate ambition strategies. These efforts will highlight the role of women in conserving land, water, and biodiversity—including the critical contributions of Indigenous knowledge—and in deploying climate mitigation and adaptation strategies in their communities.

***b. Support an Inclusive Clean Energy Economy***

Responding to the climate crisis will create new jobs and stimulate new industries. Women and members of other underserved communities should have access to these opportunities, and the sustainable infrastructure and clean energy economy must take steps to promote inclusion and counteract gender discrimination and bias. We will invest in leadership training for girls and women to promote their participation in clean energy, clean transportation, energy efficiency, natural climate solutions, ecosystem restoration, and other climate-related fields. We will also support investment in climate innovation and social entrepreneurship and promote accessible climate financing to a diverse range of groups, including youth-led and women-led grassroots organizations.



Globally, we will support the inclusion of gender in environmental assessments of infrastructure financed through foreign assistance, including by measuring the impact on women and girls in communities served by a particular infrastructure project; ensuring that project development and implementation efforts respond to the unique needs of women and girls as well as other underserved communities; and affirmatively creating gender-equitable employment and leadership opportunities. We will also support climate-resilient infrastructure projects that directly advance gender equality, including health infrastructure to address maternal mortality and morbidity, as well as digital infrastructure expressly aimed at closing the digital gender gap in low- and middle-income countries, which hinders women’s economic and civic participation and access to financial and social services.

As we navigate the shift to clean technologies and industries, we will ensure that women have access to the jobs of the future, providing training pipelines and career pathways to ensure equitable workforce opportunities. Doing so will involve inclusive expansions of fields where women are currently underrepresented, including clean energy manufacturing and deployment, as well as continued support for fields where women are well-represented—such as health care and education—that are critical to reaching a net-zero future. And we will support women’s roles in the transformative, climate-related shifts in agricultural production and labor worldwide, including their leadership in climate-resilient agriculture strategies.

*c. Address Gendered Public Health Effects Related to Climate Change*

Our domestic and international public health investments will be responsive to the disproportionate health impact of climate change on underserved populations.

Domestically, we will identify communities facing disproportionate risks from climate and environmental hazards and address the resulting health disparities and underlying vulnerabilities. Through our Administration’s Justice40 Initiative, we are working to deliver at least 40% of the overall benefits from federal investments in climate and clean energy to disadvantaged communities and developing a Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool to inform these efforts. As part of this commitment to environmental justice and equitable health outcomes, we will respond to the impact of legacy pollution, which disproportionately burdens low-income communities and communities of color and poses environmental health risks. Further, we acknowledge the unique needs of communities located near industrial facilities that produce pollution, traffic, odor, or noise, and we will work to ensure climate change mitigation efforts do not create additional pollution burdens in communities already disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards. Throughout this work, we will address gender disparities and empower women and girls to build community health resilience.

Globally, we will provide financial and technical assistance to protect women, girls and their communities from climate-related threats, including by integrating climate and gender considerations into efforts on health systems strengthening and global health security; disaster preparedness and response; food and nutrition security; water, sanitation, and hygiene; and gender-based violence prevention and response. Our foreign policy and foreign assistance will also respond to the instability, conflict, and displacement exacerbated by climate change. In ongoing efforts to respond to migration resulting directly or indirectly from climate change—including forced migration, internal displacement, and planned relocation—the options identified for protection and resettlement of displaced individuals will account for the unique needs of



women and girls, who are disproportionately likely to migrate and to be vulnerable when doing so.

## Close Gender Gaps in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Fields

For many women and girls, the ability to lead the charge against 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges like climate change and compete in the workforce of the future starts in school—and continues in the workplace. The exclusion and structural barriers that fuel the underrepresentation of women and girls in STEM fields, especially women and girls of color, continue to undermine their access to lucrative jobs that are growing in importance in our modern world, a gap that risks disadvantaging another generation of girls and women at home and abroad.

This gender gap robs nations of critically needed STEM solutions. It also excludes the voices and needs of women and girls from the development and governance of modern tools like the internet and artificial intelligence, putting them at a disadvantage in the workforce. To help close this gender gap and advance gender equity and equality through STEM, we will promote equity, access, and nondiscrimination in STEM fields; improve gender equity in access to technology; and encourage STEM innovation and entrepreneurship.

Closing gender gaps in STEM fields is critical to advancing gender equity and equality, promoting innovation, and bringing the talents and resources of people of all genders to bear in finding answers to the challenges that will shape our future. Advancing gender equity and equality through STEM also requires that we address its intersection with other fields including the arts (STEAM), design, medicine and biomedical research, entrepreneurship, and other fields that drive innovation.

To advance gender equity and equality through STEM, we will:

### *a. Promote Equity, Access, and Nondiscrimination in STEM Fields*

To advance equity, access, and nondiscrimination in STEM fields in the United States, we will incentivize efforts to provide culturally relevant science and technology education for all students, boosting opportunity for girls and people of color who are currently underrepresented. We will also invest in opportunities to create new career pathways for women in high-wage STEM fields, starting in middle and high schools, prioritizing increased access to computer science and high-quality career and technical programs that connect women to in-demand sectors, including employment in new clean energy economy jobs. These investments would also promote equity in access to good-paying jobs and increase economic security, diversify the workforce, help revitalize U.S. manufacturing, and promote basic and applied research and development.

To promote equitable STEM learning and work environments, we will pursue interventions that shift the culture of STEM to reduce bias, harassment, and discrimination. We will also promote flexibility in STEM careers to better accommodate life events including illness and caretaking responsibilities, which have exacerbated the gender gap in STEM fields during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Globally, we will invest in STEM education and training for women and girls through foreign assistance, investments in research and development, and education exchanges. We will also



support programs that aim to eliminate barriers to women and girls in STEM fields, including behavior change communication programs.

***b. Improve Gender Equity in Access to Technology***

To improve gender equity in access to technology in the United States and globally, we will increase investment in initiatives to close persistent gender gaps in access to technology, including internet connectivity, broadband, and mobile phone ownership, to facilitate access to telemedicine and online education and familiarity with skills imperative to success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. We will also invest in research on the effects of social media on mental health, including for women, girls, and LGBTQI+ people, as well as the safe uses of technology as a vehicle to provide mental health services.

***c. Encourage STEM innovation and entrepreneurship***

Given the importance of STEM skills to entrepreneurship and economic security, we will increase opportunities for diversity, equity, inclusion, and gender parity in the innovation economy by promoting entrepreneurial skills as part of STEM research, apprenticeship and training opportunities. We also will expand opportunities to participate in STEM research and development projects in cultural centers, public labs, community colleges, and minority-serving institutions, and in partnership with federal agencies with significant STEM components.

Globally, we will provide opportunities to lead in international science and technology collaborations, partnerships, and competitions, recognizing that science diplomacy is a critical tool for sharing American ideals of gender equity abroad and provides an opportunity to model equitable engagement in our technology-driven global economy.

## **Advance Full Participation in Democracy, Representation, and Leadership**

Improving gender parity in representation and leadership is integral to achieving all other strategic priorities outlined in this strategy. Supporting women’s full participation in leadership roles and ensuring they are well-represented at the tables where decisions are made—at every level—will enable us to meet our objectives across sectors, from the financial sector to the arts. We will advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the federal workforce; increase gender parity and diversity in leadership roles; ensure diversity and commitment to gender equality in justice sector roles; ensure diverse and inclusive participation and representation in decision-making; and support women- and girl-led organizations and movements.

The full participation of people of all genders is critical both to the functioning of democracies and to the success of democratic movements across the globe. At a moment when democracy at home and abroad is under assault, promoting the equitable participation of all people—regardless of gender—at all levels of political and civic life, from voting to leadership, is more important than ever. Research demonstrates that countries that provide a safe and enabling environment for women to participate equitably in politics and public life produce more inclusive and effective policy outcomes, are more peaceful, have higher economic growth, and are more stable as societies. As Vice President Harris noted both at the 2021 Commission on the Status of Women and the UN Generation Equality Forum, “the status of women is the status of democracy.” We must strive to advance both.



We are committed to ensuring that people are represented equally in public life and at all levels of the federal government—irrespective of gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and other factors—starting with our history-making Vice President, and including the record number of diverse women serving in Cabinet and senior level roles. Yet more work remains to eliminate barriers to voting and reach gender parity in U.S. leadership. Today, too many states have laws on the books that inhibit women—particularly women of color—from exercising their constitutional right to vote. Women fill only a quarter of seats in Congress and 30% of state executive and legislative positions. In the private sector, women represent just 8% of Fortune 500 leaders and 28% on S&P 500 corporate boards, and remain underrepresented as leaders and managers.

Globally, women continue to be dramatically outnumbered in leadership positions and restricted from full political participation. Women constitute only a quarter of parliamentary seats around the world; only 14 countries have reached gender parity in their national cabinet; and women lead only 24 out of 193 nations as an elected Head of State and/or Government. In addition to persistent marginalization from leadership in the global economy, women also continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions in peace processes, climate negotiations, global health and humanitarian efforts, and in the private sector, notwithstanding evidence that their participation makes sustainable agreements more likely. And women’s movements around the world, which have been shown to advance women’s power and democratic participation, continue to be grossly underfunded.

Decades of evidence confirm that women’s civil and political participation and leadership promote equality, social welfare policies like education and health care, political stability and security. Furthermore, studies show that investing in the leadership of girls is imperative to advancing the leadership of women.

To increase women’s and girls’ full participation in democracy and leadership roles, we will:

***a. Advance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce***

Fulfilling our commitment to gender equity and equality starts with ensuring that the federal government is as a model employer on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. In line with the Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce, we will strengthen our ability to recruit, hire, develop, promote, and retain a diverse group of people in our workforce while removing barriers to equal opportunity, creating respectful workplaces, and ensuring that women’s voices are heard, including through the advocacy of a union if they choose.

To advance gender parity and diversity in leadership roles, we will continue to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in federal appointments, including Cabinet positions, judicial appointments, Ambassadorships, military appointments, and other senior posts. We will also identify strategies to advance diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in leadership positions across the federal workforce—including federal contractors and locally employed staff across the globe—with a focus on recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, professional development and mentorship, pay and compensation policies, discipline policies, and other mechanisms. Furthermore, we will examine opportunities for women in nontraditional occupations, including in science and technology, law enforcement, security, and intelligence.



Priorities include advancing pay equity and transparency to ensure all federal employees are fairly compensated for their work and talents. We will also address workplace harassment, including sexual harassment, with a government-wide, comprehensive plan to prevent, respond to, and investigate harassment, including by amplifying training, education, and monitoring to create a culture that does not tolerate harassment or other forms of discrimination. Furthermore, we will increase effective resources for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility training throughout the federal workforce.

***b. Increase Gender Parity and Diversity in Leadership Roles***

We will promote transparency about diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in leadership positions across a broad array of sectors, including public, private, multilateral, and civil society, taking steps to incentivize disclosure of representation in managerial positions and board composition, which strengthen companies' bottom lines. We will support research into best practices to advance gender parity and diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in leadership positions across a range of sectors. We will invest in and evaluate initiatives to promote civic and political engagement and leadership for women and girls to close gaps and promote gender parity, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Globally, we will support training and social norm change initiatives to advance roles for women, girls, and members of underrepresented groups across a range of sectors. We will also work with local partners—including male allies—within government institutions and political parties at the national and local levels to change corrupt and discriminatory internal rules and practices and promote women's agency and leadership. We will also support local and regional women activists and women's rights organizations in advocating for needed policy reforms, holding government institutions accountable, running for office, and attaining leadership positions within government institutions.

***c. Ensure Diversity and Commitment to Gender Equality in Justice Sector Roles***

The Biden-Harris Administration has already nominated a record number of diverse judges to the federal bench, including an historic number of women of color. The Administration will continue to prioritize the nomination and appointment of a diverse and representative group of people to the federal bench who are committed to ensuring equal rights under the law, including for women, girls, and gender nonconforming people.

Globally, to promote equal justice under the law and equal access to professional opportunities, we will work with partners and allies to advance diversity, inclusion, and accessibility and increase the representation of women in justice systems around the world, including as attorneys, judges, and in other law enforcement roles.

***d. Ensure Diverse and Inclusive Participation and Representation in Decision-making***

To improve decision-making processes and ensure fair representation, we will support gender parity and initiatives to increase diversity, inclusion, and participation in the U.S. political system, from voting to representation in civic and political roles. We will also advance gender parity and women's representation in democratic movements and governance institutions around the world, including in areas of conflict and crisis. We will pursue gender parity, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility at decision-making tables across sectors, including by addressing barriers such as violence against women in politics and public life—including increasing levels of harassment, intimidation, and psychological abuse, in person and online.



We will also help enable safe environments for all people to participate freely in politics and public life, including in fragile contexts, peace processes, and democratic transitions. Wherever possible, we will advance women’s and girls’ meaningful participation and inclusion in bilateral and multilateral dialogues and processes, with a goal of reaching gender parity.

*e. Support Women- and Girl-Led Organizations and Movements*

To advance leadership and meaningful participation, we will promote movements and community-based organizations led by women, girls, and members of other underserved communities, including LGBTQI+ people. Both domestically and globally, we will support leaders and organizations pushing for greater power, influence, and leadership for women and girls and other underrepresented groups, which research confirms will pay powerful dividends in advancing women’s economic participation, shifting attitudes about gender roles and gender-based violence, and promoting democracy.



## Section III: Implementation

The White House Gender Policy Council will lead the implementation of this strategy, marshalling the resources of and working in collaboration with every White House office and executive agency. We will also ensure accountability by promoting regular reporting and transparency.

### Whole of Government Implementation

The Gender Policy Council is composed of nearly all members of the President's Cabinet and federal agencies and the heads of other White House offices. Each member has appointed a senior representative to support the Council, and we produced this strategy in consultation with those senior representatives, as well as other experts and leaders across the federal government. The implementation of this strategy will be government-wide, which is an essential part of our commitment to integrating gender across U.S. programming and policies in all executive agencies.

The Gender Policy Council will coordinate with other components of the Executive Office of the President, including the Domestic Policy Council, the National Security Council, the National Economic Council, the Climate Policy Office, the Office of the Vice President, the Council of Economic Advisers, the Council on Environmental Quality, the Office of Science and Technology Policy, and the Office of The United States Trade Representative. This strategy aligns with the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance released by President Biden in March 2021.

We will also partner with multilateral institutions and support other global efforts to advance gender equity and equality. As the international community mobilizes to implement commitments to advance gender equality and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we will join with partners and allies to accelerate the pace of change and address global gender gaps through our foreign assistance and our participation in multilateral fora, including in the United Nations General Assembly and Generation Equality Forum, the G-7 and the G-20, the Summit for Democracy, the UN Climate Change Conference, and through the Build Back Better World Partnership, among other initiatives.

The Gender Policy Council will partner with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to facilitate implementation, working in concert with agencies to identify primary areas of focus, programs, and policies for review for consistency with this strategy.

### Integration with Broader Equity Efforts

Our work to advance gender equity and equality through a whole-of-government approach falls within the Biden-Harris Administration's broader efforts to root out systemic barriers and discrimination and pursue equity and equality for all people. This strategy's implementation will be aligned with the fulfillment of mandates included in Executive Order 13985, "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government"; Executive Order 13988, "Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender



Identity or Sexual Orientation"; Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce; Executive Order 14020 "Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council"; and all executive actions that address equity and equality for underserved communities.

## Methods

Achieving the objectives outlined in the strategy requires articulating concrete goals, dedicating sufficient resources, and instituting metrics to measure progress. To that end, each federal agency will be required to establish and prioritize at least three goals that will serve to advance the objectives identified in this strategy, and detail the plans and resources needed to achieve them in an implementation plan. At least one of the identified goals should be achievable within current authorities and resources.

In recognition of the unique scope and needs of each agency, Gender Policy Council staff will offer technical assistance to agencies to help identify priorities for programming and policymaking in furtherance of this strategy. Agency implementation plans will be due within nine months of the public release of the national strategy.

Agency implementation plans should encompass strategic planning and budgeting, policy and program development, measurement and data, and management and training.

### *a. Strategic Planning and Budgeting*

As part of standard strategic planning and budgeting processes, agencies should identify, under the auspices of their three priority goals: (i) the gender gaps they aim to close; (ii) outcome measures; and (iii) budgetary, staff, and other needs to achieve targeted objectives. OMB and the Gender Policy Council will work together to ensure that agencies' budgets reflect the policies, activities, and investments outlined in this strategy.

### *b. Policy and Program Development*

To advance concrete priorities identified in furtherance of this strategy, agencies should ensure a focus on gender equity and equality in policy and program development. This requires developing policies and programs that are primarily focused on advancing gender equity and equality. It also requires mainstreaming gender equity and equality considerations into initiatives that are not principally aimed at closing gender gaps. As part of this work, agencies should identify and address existing gender and racial disparities, capitalize on the skills and contributions of people of all genders, and ensure that policies and programs are accessible and responsive to needs irrespective of gender.

### *c. Measurement and Data*

Too often, government programs in the United States and around the world fail to track or measure the effects of systemic barriers faced by women, girls, and other underserved populations. These gender data gaps, which exist in multiple areas—from the prevalence of gender-based violence to tax data to household level information on assets and homeownership—can obscure the scope of a problem. Such gaps also render our programs less effective and mask the effects of policies and initiatives on entire segments of the population, thereby undermining use of taxpayer dollars and failing to adequately serve populations most in need.



Adequate collection of gender data is critical to establishing a baseline against which agencies can rigorously measure progress on identified priorities. To ensure rigorous measurement of progress against this strategy, we will embark on a government-wide effort to strengthen data collection and analysis and close gender data gaps. This aligns with the Biden-Harris Administration’s commitment to gather and improve data to inform and promote equity. The Equitable Data Working Group—established on the first day of the Administration under Executive Order 13985—aims to strengthen data collection, reporting, and transparency across federal agencies and encourage improved, coordinated data across local and state governments. Pursuant to the Gender Policy Council’s Executive Order, we will coordinate with this Interagency Working Group and propose reforms to strengthen data collection related to gender across the federal government.

We will support collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data for all programs, to the maximum extent practicable, and will promote data collection and cross-tabulation on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and socioeconomic status, among other factors, to ensure rigorous assessment of progress and barriers for underserved communities. We will encourage more frequent data collection and disaggregation by age and include data collection on factors such as pregnancy and parenting status to identify barriers in education, the workforce, and in other sectors. We will encourage more analysis and dissemination of the gender data we do collect, and we will support efforts to close gender data gaps, including by investment in national and sub-national statistical systems strengthening. We will also incentivize efforts to address gender data gaps through bilateral and multilateral relationships, recognizing that improvements in gender data collection are integral to advancing gender equity and equality worldwide.

#### *d. Management and Training*

To succeed in implementing this strategy, agencies should take steps to strengthen the commitment of managers to gender equity and equality, such as by including this issue in Senior Executive Service performance plans and appraisals. Agencies should also bolster training, skill development, and technical expertise where needed to ensure sufficient expertise to develop, lead, and manage strategic planning, programs, and monitoring and evaluation efforts. Agency leadership should help facilitate the hiring and retention of personnel with the knowledge and skillsets needed to promote implementation of identified strategic priorities.

## **Accountability**

To promote accountability, the Gender Policy Council will prepare an annual report for submission to the President on progress made in implementing this strategy, which will be publicly released. We will also put in place mechanisms to track the work that we are doing across the federal government to advance gender equity and equality and assess the progress we are making towards our strategic priorities and the effect of our investments at home and abroad.

## **Consultation and Engagement**

External partners have been and will continue to be essential to advancing our work to promote gender equity and equality. To inform implementation of this strategy, the Gender Policy Council will continue its engagement with Congress; State, local, Tribal, and territorial



government officials; a diverse range of nonprofit and community-based organizations; faith-based organizations; labor unions and worker organizations; students and youth; private sector representatives; foreign government officials; and multilateral organizations, among others, as appropriate. The Gender Policy Council and all agencies and offices involved in the implementation of this strategy will also regularly seek and reflect input from the people whom the strategy is directly intended to benefit.



## Acknowledgements

The White House Gender Policy Council is grateful for the critical input and deep expertise that guided the development of this first-ever national gender strategy. The creation of this strategy has only been possible through collaboration across the federal government and extensive engagement with domestic and international partners.

We thank the over 30 U.S. federal government agencies and each of the components within the Executive Office of the President for their contributions. Senior Designees from each agency and office shared their vision, ideas, and feedback on the strategy's content.

We are also grateful to the diverse range of external stakeholders who provided input and recommendations for the strategy. Over 250 nonprofit and community-based organizations, civil society groups, faith-based organizations, unions, worker organizations, and academics participated in a total of 15 issue-based convenings hosted by the Gender Policy Council. In addition, we are grateful to the girls, young women, and gender nonconforming youth leaders—over 270 from across the United States and more than a dozen countries—who provided their thoughts and recommendations through a series of youth-focused listening sessions—and the local, national and global organizations who supported the participation of these youth leaders. Finally, we are grateful for the expertise shared by Members of Congress and State, Tribal and local leaders across the United States, as well as the valuable perspectives offered by partners in other governments and multilateral organizations.

Just as the formation of this strategy would not have been possible without rigorous engagement from a broad group of stakeholders, its implementation hinges on the work we will do together. We look forward to continuing this collaboration in the years ahead, in service of our vision of a world where people of all genders are guaranteed the equity, equality, and dignity they deserve.