



January 28, 2021

SENT VIA U.S. MAIL

Joe Biden  
c/o Office Of The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

Independent Women's Forum (IWF), a leading national women's organization, wishes to congratulate you on your election and inauguration. We hope to have a positive working relationship with you, your advisors, and your administration officials.

Independent Women's Forum's mission is to develop and advance policies that aren't just well-intended, but actually enhance people's freedom, choices, and opportunities. We are particularly concerned about preserving women's opportunities and well-being. Here are a few specific policy ideas that we believe the administration should champion:

- | **Expanding Access to Paid Leave:** We all want workers to have access to paid leave when they need it, but a one-size-fits-all entitlement or mandate would backfire by limiting work opportunities and incentivising discrimination against women. Paid-leave entitlement programs (also known as government-run social insurance programs) have been widely demonstrated to impose regressive taxes on low-income workers and provide the greatest benefit to those who are already financially comfortable and who today are most likely to enjoy employer-provided paid leave benefits. Any policy aimed at expanding access to paid leave should focus on those who lack on-the-job benefits and who have incomes too low to save for unpaid leaves provided under FMLA. IWF has been a thought leader in developing and advancing alternative policy solutions that expand paid leave in a fair and flexible way, without the downsides of a new government entitlement.
- | **Reforming Health Care:** Like you, we want to improve health policy. We recognize that the status quo is far from perfect. But we disagree that expanding the Affordable Care Act by adding a national public health plan is the best way forward. A "public option" threatens,

ultimately, to become the only option available to many Americans. We also caution against over-expanding the social safety net, as this threatens to weaken government services for those who need them most. Instead, we urge you to focus on enhancing competition and transparency in health care, putting patients first—giving them more and better choices at more affordable prices in a robust private market.

- | **Preserving Workplace Flexibility:** Millions of Americans—particularly women, caregivers, elderly, and people with disabilities—don't want or cannot engage in a traditional, full-time employment relationship. Many of these workers prefer the opportunity to earn money as independent contractors, direct sellers or entrepreneurs. We should promote policies that advance workplace flexibility and reject proposals that attempt to force workers back into 9-to-5 work relationships.
- | **Ensuring Social Mobility:** Work is critical for Americans of all backgrounds to experience economic mobility. Millions of people left poverty over the past four years thanks to a robust economy generating abundant opportunities. As we look for the economy to rebound from the pandemic, providing Americans with targeted and temporary aid is a stopgap solution and one that should not discourage individuals from seeking work. Conditioning public benefits such as Medicaid and SNAP on employment (or seeking employment) is a critical step that should not be rolled back, but enforced to ensure that individuals gain independence and move up the economic ladder. This also helps reserve public benefits for those who truly need them.
- | **Enhancing Educational Freedom:** Our educational institutions should put students and families in control. In response to the pandemic, in mid-March, nearly all schools in America suddenly closed their doors and transitioned to distance learning. Keeping schools closed now, nearly a year later, has disastrously harmed students, and has demonstrated that all families need educational freedom and choice—not just those who can afford expensive private school tuition.
- | **Addressing College Costs:** While student loan debt is a real problem for millions of Americans, loan forgiveness and “free college” are band-aids that will make the skyrocketing college tuition cost worse, not better. It is unfair to bail out one group of borrowers at the expense of others, many of whom did not attend an expensive university or sacrificed to pay off their loans. Instead, we should be looking to hold universities accountable for their rising costs and sometimes-predatory behavior, which is encouraged by the government's student loan programs.
- | **Combating Climate Change:** The United States has consistently led the world in technological development to address new challenges, including climate change. We should continue to take a balanced approach to improving the environment and reducing

our carbon emissions, while ensuring our country has access to reliable and affordable energy. The Paris Climate Agreement isn't necessary to fight against climate change and will hamstring American innovation. In fact, the U.S. has done a better job of leading by example in reducing emissions and improving clean energy technology outside of the agreement. We should avoid overly-aggressive policies that will raise energy costs, such as restricting natural gas development and delivery, which, in addition to destroying good jobs for thousands of Americans, will make America more dependent on foreign oil.

- | **Fostering Progress and Innovation:** In every sector—manufacturing, energy, medicine, food, work flexibility, education—innovative products and ideas are improving conditions for workers, consumers, individuals, families, and the environment. In contrast, government actions—onerous regulations, higher taxes, and product bans—reduce choice and discourage innovation. We do not believe that reducing the regulatory burden on the industries that power our economy is necessarily “harmful.” This is not to say that the government has no role in regulating industries, but regulations should be used only to advance legitimate safety concerns and not needlessly prevent progress.
- | **Controlling Illegal Immigration:** The United States is home to more immigrants than any country in the world. But, like any sovereign country, the U.S. must control its borders. Strong borders help ensure that the U.S. can continue to welcome people who arrive here legally, while being fair to both immigrants and U.S. citizens. We must put our national interests, including our security and our economy, first.
- | **Putting America First:** America still stands as the world's most powerful country, a global force for shaping a world order that prizes liberty and human dignity. But the 21st century has seen proliferating threats by despots, terrorist groups, and other bad actors. The greatest threat today comes from an increasingly totalitarian and aggressive China, allied with such predatory tyrannies as Russia, Iran, and North Korea. In standing up to these threats, America is mounting a vital defense of our own freedom and security, and the future of a civilized and peaceful world order. The U.S. should not reenter international organizations like the WHO or agreements like the Iran Deal without significant changes and caveats to hold bad actors accountable.
- | **Restoring Trust in Government:** Americans are sharply divided today, not just about political issues but also about how the government should work. Attempts to break norms—such as destroying the filibuster in the U.S. Senate, tampering with the number of justices on the U.S. Supreme Court, or doing away with the Electoral College—will continue to erode faith in our institutions and the separation of powers the Founders intended. Our system of government needs defending, not deconstructing.

| **Protecting Women's Rights:** American law has long prohibited unfair sex discrimination without erasing legitimate differences between males and females or requiring that men and women be treated exactly the same in all circumstances. Unfortunately, the movement today to erase sex differences or to make our laws completely gender neutral threatens to strip away important protections and programs for women and girls and open the door to unintended harms and inequities. IWF opposes all blanket efforts to erase legal distinctions between males and females, including passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, the Equality Act, and the application of the Supreme Court's reasoning in *Bostock v. Clayton County* to women's sports.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of these issues with members of your administration. We are dedicated to engaging in respectful public discourse about policies with you and with all Americans who wish to join us in the great debate about the best path forward for our great country.

We wish you a successful presidency, just as we have wished success for every American president. When your administration acts in ways that are consistent with our principles and advances policies we support, we will support you. When your administration acts in opposition to our principles and positions, we will oppose you—not because we desire conflict, but because we love our country.

Sincerely,



**Carrie Lukas**

*IWF President*



**Hadley Heath Manning**

*IWF Policy Director*