

Aiding America's Essential Workers During the Coronavirus Crisis: Where the Presidential Candidates Stand

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) has long supported workplace policies to address the health and caregiving needs of employees. However, as COVID-19 rapidly spreads, the lives, health, and livelihoods of millions of essential workers, most notably women, are at stake. Across the country women predominate frontline jobs that are powering communities during this crisis. They cannot take sick days, and day in and day out, they are putting the needs of others above their own. Yet, actions taken at the local, state, and federal levels are not always providing them with the protection they need to stay safe while they help to keep our country running.

The Facts: America's Essential Workers are Predominantly Women¹

	All Workforce	All Essential Industries	Grocery, Drug & Convenience	Cleaning Services	Health Care	Child Care & Social Services
% Women	47.4%	67.4%	50.5%	53.2%	76.8%	85.2%

Women, and notably women of color, make up the majority of the essential workforce needed to maintain a functioning critical infrastructure during this time of crisis, putting themselves at greater risk of contracting COVID-19 because of their proximity to infected individuals, infected environments, or the virus itself. For example, nearly one-third of all nursing assistants and home health aides are Black women, and an estimated 42 percent of maids and housekeepers are Latinas.² Yet, a haphazard response to the crisis, conflicting guidance, rushed re-openings, and the unavailability of protective equipment has left women without the most basic protections to combat the spread of the coronavirus. As a result, thousands of women on the frontlines have contracted and died from COVID-19. The 2020 presidential candidates have weighed in on how they would mitigate the risks to essential workers.

The 2020 Presidential Candidates and Essential Workers*

Donald Trump (R) ³	Joe Biden (D) ⁴
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make all critical medicines and supplies for healthcare workers in the United States 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all frontline workers qualify for priority access to personnel protective equipment (PPE) and COVID-19 testing, as well as child care assistance, and other forms of emergency COVID-19 support • Expand access to effective personal protective equipment (PPE), including through use of the Defense Production Act • Establish and enforce health and safety standards for workplaces • Enact premium pay for frontline workers

*Positions include plans and policy proposals delineated on 2020 candidate websites.

¹ Center for Economic and Policy Research (2020). [A Basic Demographic Profile of Workers in Frontline Industries](#).

² Center for American Progress (2020). [On the Frontlines at Work and at Home: The Disproportionate Economic Effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Women of Color](#)

³ Donald Trump (2020). [Trump Campaign Announces President Trump's 2nd Term Agenda: Fighting for You!](#)

⁴ Joe Biden (2020). [Joe Biden's 4-Point Plan for Our Essential Workers](#)