

# US state is first to enact workplace protections for women experiencing menopause



□ State Senator, Lori Urso in front of City Hall.

**Groundbreaking legislation in the United States saw Rhode Island become the first state in the US to expressly require employers to provide workplace accommodations for applicants and employees experiencing menopause and related medical conditions.**

**L**ori Urso is a Rhode Island state senator representing the city of Pawtucket in the United States. This year she introduced a bill to add “menopause and menopause-related conditions” to the Fair Employment Practices Law in her state.

The *Menopause Matters* team were delighted when the Senator contacted us directly, having subscribed to our digital magazine ([menopausematters.pressreader.com](http://menopausematters.pressreader.com)), to tell us more about her work.

### **A small part for *Menopause Matters***

We were also very proud when Lori told us: “In the US, we are making progress but are not quite as forward- →

• Lori at work in The Senate.



← thinking as the UK on the topic. When I introduced my legislation, the information I have learned by reading Menopause Matters highlights over several years was a big help in making my presentation.”

In June 2025 Lori was back in touch with some great news: “My bill passed the State Senate.” The next stage was to pass out of the House Committee on Labor and then be considered by the full House of Representatives. Lori was back in touch quickly with big news: “The bill just passed the House unanimously!” The final stage was to receive Governor Dan McKee’s signature for the bill to be enacted.

He didn’t hesitate and on 30th June 2025 Rhode Island officially became the first state to enact workplace protections for women experiencing menopause.

A companion bill was also introduced in the House by Representative Karen Alzate.

“Menopause is a difficult and personal subject that has been stigmatized in this country.

But as something that affects half our population, it is time we recognize that it is a workforce issue, especially as our workforce is aging along with our population,” said Lori.

“Our current lack of workplace protections for women going through the menopause transition is both an equity issue, contributing to inadequate retirement savings and lost leadership opportunities for our female workers, and an economic drag on our state’s businesses and agencies, as employers face workforce shortages and risk losing female workers at the height of their institutional knowledge and skill. Today, we have taken the first step toward setting a nationwide example by protecting our workers, retaining our talent, and helping women achieve their highest potential.”

Representative Karen Alzate added: “Menopause is not something that women choose to experience and its effects on a woman’s mind and body can pose significant challenges in daily life and the workplace. This bill was introduced because women should not have to risk being penalized or discriminated against at their job due to a naturally occurring phenomenon that they have no control over.”

### What the bill will do

Rhode Island employment law already prohibits workplace and hiring discrimination related to pregnancy, childbirth and all related conditions. This protection includes requiring workplaces to reasonably accommodate conditions related to pregnancy and childbirth, and protecting employees and prospective employers from being passed over for hiring or promotion or even being fired because of these same conditions.

The legislation also adds menopause to this list of protected conditions, encouraging support for women as they experience troublesome menopause-related conditions that they are often afraid or ashamed to disclose to managers and co-workers.

Patrick Crowley, president of the Rhode Island American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) added: “Women’s health care is a vital component of a healthy workplace, and that is why it is critical to extend the fair employment practices law to cover menopause and menopause-related conditions. All workers should be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their health status. On behalf of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, thank you to Senator Urso and Representative Alzate for proposing this important update to our laws.”

As Lori and Karen told the US law makers, women typically experience their menopause transition

• The bill was passed unanimously.



in their 40s or 50s, with symptoms lasting between three and seven years. During this transition, women may experience hot flashes, insomnia, night sweats, migraine headaches, heart palpitations, anxiety and panic, brain fog and other troublesome symptoms caused by declining estrogen. For some women, these symptoms may be debilitating. Often women are unprepared for the onset, and lack adequate advice and support. These concerns are amplified as they pertain to managing symptoms in the workplace.

Madalyn McGunagle, policy associate at the Rhode Island American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) said: "Menopause is a natural and common phase in the lives of millions of individuals, but its impact and symptoms can have profound and long-lasting effects on a person's health and daily life. The ACLU of Rhode Island applauds the passage of this legislation, which makes explicit that employers must provide reasonable accommodations to employees experiencing menopause, just as the law currently requires accommodations for various pregnancy-related conditions. By extending protections to those experiencing menopause, we will ensure that they are given the necessary accommodations to continue performing their jobs effectively."

In a survey of workplaces by the US's Society for Women's Health Research, 70% of supervisors reported that their workplace had no formal menopause policies, and 36% of employees were unsure if any resources were available to them at their workplace. The same study showed that menopause symptoms caused one in four women to not pursue or consider not pursuing a leadership position at work, and two in five women considered or actually found a new job because of their symptoms.

"Addressing menopause in employment practices is crucial because it impacts employee well-being, retention and productivity, ultimately benefiting both

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employees and employers through better health outcomes and a more engaged workforce," said Angela Lima, policy and advocacy programme director for the Women's Fund of Rhode Island.

A study by the Mayo Clinic also found that menopause-related symptoms cost US businesses \$1.8 billion in lost productivity per year. A co-author of the study said their findings showed that employers need to improve workplace policies to aid their female employees.

Commenting on the news, founder and publisher of *Menopause Matters*, Dr Heather Currie MBE said: "Such a big achievement and huge step forward, and I'm delighted that Menopause Matters was able to play a tiny role in this work."

Senator Lori Urso made our day by adding: "I'd say more than a tiny role where I am concerned." **MM**



• Senate Floor Opening Day.

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