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## Celebrating Women in Manufacturing: Honoring the Past, Empowering the Future

1 message

Erica Iheme &lt;eiheme@jobstomoveamerica.org&gt;

Tue, Mar 25, 2025 at 11:34 AM

Reply-To: eiheme@jobstomoveamerica.org

To: llaborde@jobstomoveamerica.org



Hi Lauren,

This Women's History Month, I celebrate the resilience and strength of women in manufacturing—those who have broken barriers, driven innovation, and shaped our workforce. From [Rosie the Riveter](#) to today's factory floor leaders, our contributions have strengthened communities and transformed industries. As we honor this legacy, I also recognize the need to ensure continued progress for women in the workplace through justice, equality, dignity, and solidarity.

There are ongoing discussions about potential changes to policies and programs that have long supported women's workplace rights. The U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau, established over a century ago, has played a critical role in advocating for equal pay, safe working conditions, and greater access to quality jobs for women in manufacturing. Any shifts in the Bureau's role or scope could impact workplace equity initiatives that have helped countless women enter and advance in this field. At JMA, we have long partnered with the Women's Bureau, and they have even

attended our Alabama Learning Trip. They have been strong supporters of our work, just as we support their critical research in advancing equity and opportunity for women in the workforce.

Women make up nearly half of the total workforce but still hold less than a third of manufacturing jobs. Programs like the Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) grant have provided essential pathways for women into high-quality careers. The future of such programs depends on continued support for policies that promote inclusive workforce development and uphold dignity and fairness in the workplace.

As the [Organizing Director](#) at Jobs to Move America (JMA), I am committed to expanding opportunities for marginalized communities—including women, people of color, and veterans—by working with manufacturers like New Flyer to ensure access to training, apprenticeships, and stable, well-paying jobs. Through Community Benefits Agreements, we work collectively to secure strong workplace standards that guarantee fair wages, safe conditions, and equitable access to career growth for all workers.

Organizing is deeply personal to me—I have been dedicated to labor rights since childhood, learning from my father in Birmingham, AL. I was proud to be part of the efforts that led to securing the New Flyer Community Benefits Agreement under the Trump administration, and I continue to work closely with workers seeking to improve their quality of life and working conditions.

Research has consistently shown that gender equity in the workplace strengthens businesses and communities. As we navigate potential changes in workforce policies, it is important to stay informed and engaged in discussions that impact women's access to good jobs and fair working conditions. Solidarity among workers, advocates, and policymakers is crucial in ensuring that manufacturing remains a field where justice and opportunity thrive.

As we mark Women's History Month, I invite you to join me in celebrating the achievements of women in manufacturing and advocating for a future where all workers have equal opportunities to thrive. Let's continue to uplift women's voices, support equitable policies, and work together to ensure that manufacturing remains a field of opportunity for everyone.

In solidarity,



**Erica Iheme**  
Organizing  
Director

**Join us in the fight for good jobs and healthy communities.**

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