



www.bpwhk.net

info.bpwhk@gmail.com

5th February 2020

Following is a letter by The Hong Kong Association of Business and Professional Women (BPWHK) expressing concerns to the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in response to the insufficient family-friendly working arrangements during the outbreak of the novel coronavirus in Hong Kong:

In view of the outbreak of the novel coronavirus and the following two announcements:

- i) The Education Bureau (EDB) announced on 31st January 2020 all schools (including kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, special schools and private schools offering non-formal curriculum) would resume their classes as early as 2nd March 2020, yet subject to further assessment; and
- ii) Social Welfare Department (SWD) announced on 1st February 2020 all aided child care centres, day care centres for the elderly, sheltered workshops, integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres and day activity centres will suspend delivery of their services. These centres will, however, remain open to serve those in need. Members of the public who have the need for the services mentioned may contact the centres or service units concerned in advance,

BPWHK urges the Government to review the current extreme situation and decide whether it is necessary to issue a special announcement on "extreme conditions" and thus announce to the public a special work-from-home extension until 2nd March 2020.

The Government announced that government employees, except for staff of departments providing emergency and essential public services, could work from home until 2nd February 2020, instead of coming to the office. A number of private companies in Hong Kong have decided to let some of their employees work from home since the first working day after the Lunar New Year holiday, as a precautionary measure against the coronavirus outbreak. However, the limited child care services and current school suspension till 2nd March 2020 imply extreme difficulties to both male and female employees who are parents and who cannot take care of their families because they need to go to work in the coming few weeks. BPWHK believes the Government of HKSAR, as a leading employer in Hong Kong, is obliged to announce a work-from-home extension till 2nd March 2020 during this "extreme condition". BPWHK also believes this exemplary can contribute to pursuing comprehensive policies of

family-friendly work environment, flexibility of family division of labour and better economic development of Hong Kong in the long run.

It is learnt from the members of BPWHK that quite a number of parents demand an extension of work-from-home arrangement during this special school suspension period in order that their children can be taken care of with sufficient parental attention both physically and mentally. With this demand and the above, will the Government inform the public:

- i) An announcement of a work-from-home extension for the Government employees till 2nd March 2020;
- ii) An announcement of urging private sectors (including SMEs) to provide family-friendly working arrangements that allow employees to have flexible working hours to fulfil home caretakers' duties under extreme conditions; and
- iii) An announcement of regulating private sectors to apply long-term family-friendly working policies under any extreme conditions to both male and female employees to advocate equal share of home caretakers' duties.

The Hong Kong Association of Business and Professional Women

February 2020

The above statement is jointly supported by BPWHK's partnering organizations:

- Encompass Hong Kong (<http://www.encompasshk.com/>)
- HK Momtrepreneurs (<http://www.hkmomtreprenuers.com/>)
- JCI Bauhinia (<http://www.bjc.org.hk/>)
- The Women's Foundation (<http://www.twfhk.org/>)

