



February 9, 2015

Testimony to House Business and Labor Committee
Provided by: Paloma Sparks, Legislative Director
Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2006, which would add existing equal pay law into civil rights law as well as the current wage and hour laws.

In 2011, Commissioner Brad Avakian directed the Oregon Council on Civil Rights (OCCR) to study the issue of pay equality in Oregon. In 2013, the legislature passed Senate Bill 744, directing BOLI and the Council to continue to study the issue and make recommendations to the Oregon Legislature. Early in 2014, the Council produced the Pay Inequality in Oregon report. That report finds that women in Oregon still make just 79 cents for every dollar earned by a man.

Pay inequality affects women's financial stability throughout their earning lives. Women continue to take home less income, are less likely to earn raises and promotions at the same pace, earn fewer retirement benefits, and accumulate lower lifetime wealth. At the same time two-thirds of working women are the primary or co-breadwinner in their families. Pay inequality affects families across Oregon.

Creating a more expansive equal pay law was one of the recommendations from the Council. Oregon has long been forward thinking when it comes to equal pay. Our current law prohibiting discriminatory wages on the basis of sex has been in existence since 1955. ORS 652.220 states:

*"No employer shall-
In any matter discriminate between the sexes in the payment of wages for work of comparable character, the performance of which requires comparable skills.
Pay wages to any employee at a rate less than that at which the employer pays wages to employees of the opposite sex for work of comparable character, the performance of which requires comparable skills."*

HB 2006 simply expands on the definition of what is "comparable" and/or "equivalent" and adds enforcement of ORS 652.220 into Oregon's civil rights laws. This change was made for the reason that most people think of equal pay as a civil rights issue rather than an unpaid wages issue so, we are putting the law where it should have been all along. The bill also adds language giving employers tools for identifying legitimate business reasons that could account for a difference in wages other than on the basis of sex.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2006.

PORTLAND

800 NE Oregon St. Suite 1045
Portland, OR 97232-2180
(971) 673-0761
Fax (971) 673-0762

SALEM

3865 Wolverine St. NE; E-1
Salem, OR 97305-1268
(503) 378-3292
FAX (503) 373-7636

EUGENE

1400 Executive Parkway, Suite 200
Eugene, OR 97401-2158
(541) 686-7623
FAX (541) 686-7980

BEND

Apprenticeship and Training
Worksource Bend
1645 NE Forbes Rd, Ste 106
Bend, OR 97701-4990
(541) 322-2435
FAX (541) 389-8265

Oregon Relay TTY:711

MEDFORD

Apprenticeship and Training
119 N Oakdale Ave.
Medford, OR 97501-2629
(541) 776-6201
FAX (541) 776-6284

www.oregon.gov/boli

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

