

Kate Brown
Governor



Oregon Commission for Women
"Advocating Equality and Diversity"
1819 SW 5th Ave., Portland, OR 97201
O 503.302.9725/F 503.473.8519
Email: oaco.mail@oregon.gov
Website: www.oregon.gov/Women

OCFW Testimony in Support of SB 491
March 4, 2015, 1 pm, Hearing Room C
Senate Workforce Committee

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Senators Gelser, Knopp and Rosenbaum:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning SB 491 ensuring that state contractors have training on pay equity issues and policies in place prohibiting wage discrimination and allowing employees to discuss and compare their wages.

The members of the Oregon Commission for Women strongly support passage of SB 491. We believe that leveling the playing field for pay equity benefits all of Oregon. This legislation builds on the research and the recommendations of the Oregon Council on Civil Rights regarding pay inequality. Pay inequality based on gender and race creates an earnings gap that impairs lifetime savings, housing, education and retirement. The gap begins early in the careers of women and minorities and builds throughout the earning years. Among all communities in Oregon, women overwhelmingly make less for doing the same work as men, with Latina and African American women experiencing the worst imbalances.

Based on previous legislation Oregon has shown a commitment to prevent the effects of pay disparity but despite these protections, gender and race based disparities exist. By employing new programs and policies at the state level, Oregon can become a national leader in working to achieve the goal of full pay equality.

The state of Oregon relies on the expertise and wage policies of its many large contractors to assure that good practice in the private sector is keeping pace with the state's commitment to wage equity. This legislation makes good sense for all of us, ensuring that training is available for these contractors and ensuring that they have addressed wage disparity with appropriate internal policies. This is an important public policy step in working with key private sector employers toward the broader goal of realizing equal pay in Oregon.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Vardavas, Chair, Oregon Commission for Women

OR Commission for Women

Chair:

Stephanie Vardavas

Vice Chair:

Jeanne Burch

Commissioners:

Dr. Doris Cancel-Tirado
Megan Jacquot
Sheri Malstrom
Jessica Rodriguez-Montegna
Dr. Barbara Spencer
Stephanie Swanson

Legislative Liaisons:

Sen. Laurie Monnes
Anderson
Rep. Betty Komp

Staff:

Lucy Baker, Administrator
Nancy Kramer, Executive Asst.