



FAMILY FORWARD OREGON

Smart policies for today's families.

May 6, 2015

Testimony in support of HB 2007: Equal Pay
Submitted by Kate Newhall, Family Forward

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2007 which will allow employees to discuss wages with co-workers without fear of retaliation. Family Forward sees this as an important component of addressing pay inequality in Oregon.

Equal pay for equal work is still a far off reality for most women. Wage discrimination takes many forms, but can be seen across all industries, at all ages for working women. **Accounting for all other variables, American women still make 78 cents for every dollar a man earns** – a gap of 22%.¹ This is even more marked for women of color: African American women are paid 64 cents and Latinas are paid just 56 cents for every dollar a white man earns.²

In 2015 women in Oregon and across the U.S. are still being paid lower wages than men, simply because they are women.

This has dire consequences for women and the families that rely on them. Mothers, in particular, are affected by the wage gap. They are now the primary or sole breadwinners in nearly 40 percent of families nationwide.³ And here in Oregon, there are 166,453 family households headed by women.⁴ An incredible 34 percent of those families- that's 56,428 family households- are living on incomes below the federal poverty line.⁵ When women- and mothers- aren't earning equal pay for equal work, Oregon families suffer. Women in the workforce are essential to our economy and their wages make the difference between a family that's just scraping by or one that's getting ahead.

There is not one policy solution to solve the wage gap. However, we do have an opportunity this year to address some of the barriers that prevent women from getting equal pay for equal work. Paycheck transparency in the workplace would allow all workers to talk about their pay

¹ National Women's Law Center. *Insecure and Unequal: Poverty Among Women & Families 2000-2013*. Available from: <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/insecure-unequal-poverty-and-income-among-women-and-families-2000-2013>.

² Ibid.

³ Wang, W., Parker, K., & Taylor, P. (2013, May 29). Breadwinner Moms. Pew Research Center Publication. Retrieved 22 March 2014, from <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/05/29/breadwinner-moms/>

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2012, Geographies: All States within United States and Puerto Rico, Table DP02: Selected Social Characteristics in the United States. Retrieved 27 February 2014, from

http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_12_1YR_DP02&prodType=table (Calculation uses family households headed by females living in a household with family and no husband. A family household includes a householder, one or more people living in the same household who are related to the householder, and anyone else living in the same household.)

⁵ Ibid.



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with their co-workers without fear of retaliation. HB 2007 provides these protections for workers discussing wage and salary information.

A national study found that 61 percent of private sector employees had been discouraged or prohibited from discussing wage and salary information.⁶ When women and people of color do not know what their colleagues are earning, it is very difficult – sometimes impossible- for them to know if they are being paid equitably for equal work. This is especially true in jobs that have historically been occupied by women and people of color, who were- and continue to be – systematically underpaid because of discrimination.

Workers must be able to ascertain what they are earning in a job position relative to someone with the same skills, experience and responsibility. Women are paid less for equal work across and within all industries. For example, among the occupations with the most people working full time, year round, women are paid less than men. Women are paid just 63 cents for every dollar paid to men in sales occupations; 68 cents in production; 74 cents in management; and 89 cents in office and administrative support occupations as compared to men.⁷ Allowing for greater pay transparency would help to remedy this wage gap in and across economic sectors.

Right now Oregon women and families are being shortchanged almost ten thousand dollars each year, amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars over a lifetime because of the pay gap. With more families than ever relying solely on women's paychecks for their livelihood, we must address wage inequality to ensure the financial strength and success of all women and families.

Family Forward sees HB 2007 as important step toward achieving equal pay for equal work in Oregon and urges your support.

⁶ Institute for Women's Policy Research, Pay Secrecy and Paycheck Fairness: New Data Shows Pay Transparency Needed, (2010), available at: www.iwpr.org/press-room/press-releases/pay-secrecy-and-paycheckfairness-new-data-shows-pay-transparency-needed.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. (2014). Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement: Table PINC-06: Occupation of Longest Job in 2012--People 15 Years and Over, by Total Money Earnings in 2013, Work Experience in 2013, Race, Hispanic Origin, and Sex. Retrieved 18 September 2014, from http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032014/perinc/pinc06_000.htm. Available at: <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/workplace-fairness/fair-pay/americas-women-and-the-wage-gap.pdf>