



Testimony in Support of SB 752

Chris Hewitt

February 22, 2017

Chair Taylor and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association, representing over 14,000 registered nurses in our state, I urge you to support Senate Bill 752. As nurses, ONA members recognize that ensuring equitable wages for all is both a critical issue of economic fairness and also vital to ensuring that our health care workforce is adequately compensated for providing care in our communities.

Currently, the average woman working full-time is paid approximately 80 cents for every dollar that a typical full-time male employee is paid, with even wider disparities depending on one's race and ethnicity.¹ With the overwhelming majority of today's registered nurse workforce being comprised of women², this continuing gap in average compensation has an outsized impact on the nursing sector and undermines the ability of our health care system to deliver consistent, quality patient care.

ONA supports SB 752 as an important tool for remedying these long-standing and harmful wage inequities that persist in Oregon's workplaces. SB 752 would prohibit employers from screening potential new hires based upon their salary history, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion or ethnicity. The bill also requires employers to demonstrate an explicit necessity for pay differentials in the workplace that are not otherwise based on merit, seniority of production-based work. These measures, coupled with a robust enforcement process enabling workers to make claims for wage violations, will effectively help to rectify unjust pay gaps that hinder progress for many workers in Oregon.

As studies demonstrate that an increasing share of women are primary breadwinners in households across the country, pay inequity remains a significant obstacle for patients and families to meet their basic needs.³ ONA members understand the crucial connection between earning a fair, living wage and the ability to be self-sufficient that leads to improved health outcomes.

Increasing accountability and transparency in determining employee compensation is a vital step toward addressing the wage disparities that continue to adversely impact economic prosperity for numerous families and patients in our state. ONA urges your support for SB 752.

¹ Gould, Scheider, Geier, "What is the gender pay gap and is it real?", Economic Policy Institute, <http://www.epi.org/publication/what-is-the-gender-pay-gap-and-is-it-real/>, (Oct. 20, 2016).

² "Men in Nursing Occupations", American Community Survey Highlight Report, http://www.census.gov/people/io/files/Men_in_Nursing_Occupations.pdf, (Feb. 2013).

³ "Our Voices: A Snapshot of Working Women", AFL-CIO, <http://www.aflcio.org/Issues/Work-and-Family/Equal-Pay-Equal-Say/Our-Voices-A-Snapshot-of-Working-Women>. (2016).