

Dear Members of the House Committee on Business and Labor,

As an Oregon resident, small business owner, a woman of color, a mom and an active member of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I am writing to urge you to support House Bill 2005 promoting pay equity.

AAUW's extensive research on the gender pay gap shows that, on average, women working full time in the United States are paid just 80% of what men are paid – a pay gap of 20%. With a pay gap of 19%, Oregon ranks 21st among states and the District of Columbia. The pay gap is even greater for women of color and moms. You can learn more about this research at <http://www.aauw.org/research/the-simple-truth-about-the-gender-pay-gap>.

The pay gap and pay discrimination have real consequences. With record numbers of women in the workforce and women increasingly being the primary, or even sole, breadwinners of their households, pay discrimination hurts the majority of Oregon families. Especially in times of economic recession, such as the one we experienced recently, the pay gap seriously undermines the economic security and wellbeing of families. In addition, pay discrimination lowers total lifetime earnings, inhibiting women's ability to benefit from social security and pension plans, save for retirement, buy a home or pay for a college education. I think you'll agree that these are reasonable goals that many of us expect to achieve.

Oregon has a rich history in the pursuit of pay equity. In 1955, Representative Edith Green (D-OR) co-sponsored the first bill that required "equal pay for work of comparable value requiring comparable skills." A version of this bill was enacted as the Equal Pay Act in 1963. Closer to home, Oregon law already requires all employers to provide men and women with equal pay for equal work. For your consideration today, House Bill 2005 further clarifies definitions relating to comparable work, extends time limits on claims and protects seniority rights for employees using sick or medical leave. This last provision is of particular importance in light of the social norm where women overwhelmingly bear the burden of care.

In addition to rightfully advancing fairness, your support of House Bill 2005 would do Representative Edith Green, the American Association of University Women and me proud. Consider it a step in the right direction for humankind.

Respectfully submitted,

Shilpi Banerjee