

Please Vote Yes on HB 2746

Testimony of Astrid Kurniawan | March 5, 2025

I am writing in support of HB 2746. I felt it important to include my experience and my voice in support of this pay transparency legislation, which will finally empower individuals and help the Bureau of Labor and Industries enforce the existing pay equity laws.

My background is in science, and today, I want to use a scientific analogy to explain why pay transparency is the catalyst needed for pay equity. In chemistry, a reaction may be too slow or may not happen at all without a catalyst—a force that lowers the barrier and makes change possible. Equity laws exist, but without transparency, they lack enforcement. Companies have no immediate incentive to change unless they are forced to, and employees often remain unaware of wage disparities for years. **Pay transparency is the catalyst that makes pay equity laws work.**

My Experience: How Pay Transparency Exposed Pay Inequity

I worked as a **strategy consulting manager** in the pharmaceutical industry, leading government and commercial projects, managing direct reports, and spearheading hiring efforts. Consulting follows a structured, linear career progression—employees start as junior associates and advance based on demonstrated mastery. Promotions and pay should reflect experience and performance.

Yet, even in this clear-cut system, **pay transparency revealed stark disparities**. A job posting in a state with pay transparency laws exposed that a newly hired male consultant—less experienced than me—was being paid significantly more than multiple women in the same role, including his own manager. I later confirmed I was making **\$40,000 less than this male counterpart**, despite that I had greater responsibilities including leading the hiring committee, managing direct reports, and securing a major contract.

At first, I believed my company would correct the issue once they were made aware. **They did not**. Instead, I spent over a year advocating for fair pay while continuing to perform at a higher level for less compensation. **When I persisted, I faced retaliation**—a promised promotion was deliberately delayed, and I was removed from the hiring committee I had created. That was a clear message: **seeing pay disparities and demanding equity made me a threat**.

Ultimately, I filed a formal complaint with BOLI and my company gave me the title I had already been performing at and a **35% increase in total compensation**. Yet, even after this adjustment, thanks again to pay transparency, I knew **my new counterpart was still making \$20,000 more than me**—again, despite similar roles and my additional responsibilities.

Key Lessons: Why Pay Transparency Matters

1. Pay Transparency Prevents Wage Theft

Without transparency, companies can **deny employees fair wages for years** with no consequences. The company that underpaid me only corrected it when forced to. **How many more women are unknowingly being underpaid simply because they lack access to salary information?**

2. Pay Transparency Reduces Productivity Loss & Psychological Harm

Pay inequity isn't just financial—it **erodes trust, motivation, and workplace culture**. Instead of focusing on leadership and clients, I had to spend excessive energy advocating for fairness. Employers claim to value retention, but nothing **poisons morale more than knowing you are valued less than your colleagues for no valid reason**.

3. The "Meritocracy" Myth: Transparency Proves That Performance Alone Does Not Guarantee Fair Pay

Businesses argue that hard work leads to success, but if salaries are hidden, **how can we verify that pay is based on merit?** My case proves that even a structured career ladder doesn't prevent gender pay gaps—**only transparency and enforcement can**.

4. If Pay Inequities Exist in Consulting, They Exist Everywhere

Consulting is an industry with **precise, structured promotions and salary bands**. If **wage disparities persist even in this system**, they are likely far worse in industries with subjective promotion criteria.

Oregon's Pay Equity Law Has Been in Place Since 2017—Yet It Failed Me

Oregon's pay equity law was enacted in **2017**, yet my experience proves that **without pay transparency, these laws lack enforcement power**. If the law alone were enough, **my salary would have been corrected automatically**—instead, I had to uncover the disparity, escalate the issue to HR, and endure a year of delays and retaliation before my pay was adjusted.

This highlights a critical point: **Employers are not proactively identifying and correcting wage gaps. They are waiting until employees force them to**. HB 2746 changes that by **ensuring workers have the tools to hold employers accountable**.

HB 2746 Is the Catalyst We Need

Just as a chemical reaction needs a catalyst, **pay equity laws need transparency to function**. Oregon has already passed equal pay laws—now, **HB 2746 ensures those laws actually work**. What happened to me was unjust. But I was **fortunate enough to uncover it and have the capacity to fight back**. Without pay transparency, I would have remained underpaid for even more years. Now, you have the opportunity to prevent others from experiencing the same injustice. **HB 2746 will empower individuals, help BOLI enforce existing laws, and make pay equity a reality**.

Please vote YES on HB 2746.

Astrid Kurniawan

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