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**Testimony of
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**In SUPPORT of HB14 -Equal Pay for Equal Work—Inquiring About Wages—Prohibition on
Adverse Action
Before the Maryland House Economic Matters Committee**

February 4, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of the National Women's Law Center. The National Women's Law Center has been working since 1972 to secure and defend women's legal rights and opportunities, and to help women and families achieve economic security. Equal pay is a vital concern for Maryland working families, who depend on women wages to achieve economic security. Yet, pay discrimination remains a persistent barrier to women economic success in Maryland, particularly for Maryland women of color who face some of the largest wage gaps in the country.

Pay transparency is a crucial tool for closing gender and racial wage gaps. If employees can discuss their pay without fear of retaliation, employees are better able to learn about pay disparities, evaluate whether they are experiencing pay discrimination, and work with their employer to address any unjustified disparities. Pay transparency also promotes employee loyalty and productivity, which is good for employee bottom line.¹

That is why we support HB 14, which would correct a technical oversight in the equal pay law which this Committee and then the General Assembly passed in 2016. We were proud to be among the many organizations that worked on and supported the 2016 equal pay law and agree that the clarification provided by HB 14 is important. Employees should be protected from retaliation not only if they are inquiring or discuss another employee wages, but also if they inquire about their own wages.

Creating an environment in which employees can speak about their pay and approach their employer to inquire about their pay without fear of being fired is crucial to closing the wage gap and helping employers and employees work together to address wage gaps and avoid going to court. HB 14 will help foster such an environment.

We urge this Committee to support HB 14.

¹ See, Deborah Thompson Eisenberg, Money, Sex and Sunshine: A Market-Based Approach to Pay Discrimination, 43 Ariz. State L.J. 951, 1001-15 (2011); Lamb, N. & Klein, W., A Proactive Approach to Wage Equality is Good for Business, Employment Relations Today (Summer 2015), <http://arjuna-capital.com/news/a-proactive-approach-to-wageequality-is-good-for-business/>; See, Andrew Chamberlain, Is Salary Transparency More Than a Trend?, Glassdoor (Apr. 27, 2015), <https://www.glassdoor.com/research/studies/issalary-transparency-more-than-a-trend/>