



Hearing Testimony March 3, 2020
House Appropriations Committee
Service Employees International Union, Local 500, CtW, CLC

House Bill 417 – State Employment – Wage History and Wage Range

SUPPORT

SEIU Local 500 represents over 20,000 working people in Maryland, Washington D.C., and Virginia. Our union represents the support staff at the Montgomery County Public School system, Family Child Care Providers, Adjunct Faculty at several Maryland colleges and universities, staff at non-profits and many other working people across the region. SEIU Local 500 believes that Maryland must be a place where people are fairly compensated for their work, regardless of age, race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity, which is why we support House Bill 417, the Paycheck Fairness Act. We also would like to thank Senator Cheryl Kagan and Delegate Barron for their leadership on this important issue.

In Maryland, women earn 85.5 cents for every man's dollar; this injustice is starker still for women of color, with African-American women making only 69.7 cents and Latina women making 46.6 cents on the dollar. Recent history in our own state shows that long-standing public employment practices exacerbate this disparity. In 2019, the Montgomery County Council found that by inquiring into salary histories during the hiring process, the county was perpetuating the pay disparity as women so often had a history of lower salaries than their male counterparts. Basing the salaries of new hires on past compensation only served to keep women employees stuck in a pattern of unequal pay for equal work. When a bill was proposed by a member of the County Council to right this wrong, our members were among the first to raise their voices in support, and we were proud to help this pay equity act pass at the county level. The current bill, HB417, is based on the Montgomery County legislation and seeks to extend its protections to public employees across the State of Maryland. It therefore only makes sense for our organization to lend our full support, the same as we did last year in Rockville.

By passing HB 417 this session, Maryland as a state and as a public employer can take a stand against pay inequity and measurably improve the economic security of working families who earn their living in the public sector. It is for this reason and for the sake of fairness that we ask for your support for HB417 and strongly urge a favorable committee report. Thank you each for your dedication to passing this legislation, to fairness and justice, and to the working people of our state – and thank you for considering our testimony.

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