



5082 Dorsey Hall Drive, Suite 102 Ellicott City, MD 21042
Phone: 410-997-3440 FAX: 410-997-3443 www.hceanea.org

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 123
Labor and Employment – Wage History and Wage Range**

**House Economic Matters Committee
February 4, 2020
1:00 PM**

**Colleen Morris
Howard County Education Association, President**

The Howard County Education Association (HCEA) supports House Bill 123, legislation that prohibits an employer from relying on an applicant's wage history for screening or considering the applicant for employment or in determining the pay for the applicant.

HCEA represents over 6,000 educators and school employees who work in Howard County's public schools. HCEA is the professional association and the exclusive representative in collective bargaining for all teachers and most education support professionals in Howard County. It is in this capacity that we have worked with HCPSS management to create initial salary placement for our unit employees that include the employee's previous work and educational experience, not their previous salaries.

Asking employees for previous wage history may seem like an acceptable and innocuous practice. However, two years ago, I uncovered what I believe shows that gender discrimination is embedded in this practice. It came to my attention that two HCPSS employees hired five months apart, were offered very different salaries for the same job, one male and one female. The female employee had a master's degree in communications plus 15 years of experience in the field. She was offered a salary of \$77,200. The male employee had a two-year undergraduate degree in communications with 9 years of experience in the field and was offered a salary of \$86,700. The difference supporting the placement on the salary scale was that the woman's most recent job was lower paying. To get her foot in the door to employment with HCPSS, she had taken a 10 month, secretarial position because she thought this would improve her chances for being hired to a position within her field. As you can see, she was hired at a substantially lower pay even though she had a higher degree and more experience than her male counterpart.

When this situation was brought to the attention of the school system they quickly reclassified the employees and move them onto a corrected scale. Once they took into consideration the employee's education and experience, not simply wages at their last job, the man's placement on the scale was \$86,723 and the woman's was \$88,241. This was a difference of \$23 for the man but, \$11,041 a year for the woman employee!

Women still earn on average about 80 cents to a man's dollar nationwide, thus, basing salaries on past wages ensures that women continue to be disadvantaged in future jobs. Emily Martin, General Counsel at the National Women's Law Center, stated that using past salary as a guide in negotiations is another place where unjustified inequities creep in because women tend to ask for less in negotiations than men, and employers don't react as well when women negotiate.

Even though this bill did not pass two years ago, HPCSS voluntarily stopped this practice and it has no negative impact on their ability to find and fund the candidates qualified for the job. We urge a favorable report on House Bill 123 so all of Maryland can join the growing list of states that have adopted wage history bans for employers.