



Business and
Professional
Women/MD

February 4, 2020

In Support of HB 123 (Labor and Employment--Wage History and Wage Range)

Founded in 1919, BPW/USA was the first national organization formed to promote equality for women in the workplace. Business and Professional Women of Maryland (BPW/MD) continues the mission of the national organization, which merged with the BPW Foundation in 2009. We are a statewide, nonprofit, nonpartisan, all-volunteer organization with a diverse membership that includes administrators, teachers, business owners, and many other professions. Throughout the years, fair and equal pay has been a major focus of BPW's legislative efforts.

BPW members overwhelmingly support legislation that will strengthen existing equal pay laws. More than 55 years after the passage of the Equal Pay Act of 1963, it is clear that there is still a significant gender pay gap. AAUW reports that in 2018, the median annual earnings for men in Maryland were \$62,167 compared to \$53,421 for women--an earnings ratio of just 86 percent according to the most recent census data. The gap is worse for most women of color and working mothers. Research indicates that the gender wage gap persists regardless of industry, occupation, or education level. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, if change continues at the same glacial pace as it has done for the past fifty years, it will take 40 years--or until 2059--for women to finally reach pay parity. For women of color, the rate of change is even slower.

Women are paid less than men in the same job classification in nearly every industry. Employers who set pay based on a candidate's prior salary often perpetuate that discrimination. Continuing pay inequity results in women having fewer savings, lower Social Security benefits, and lower retirement benefits. Lost wages due to the pay gap mean families have less money to spend on goods and services. The economy suffers as a result.

Maryland must continue to adopt policies that will improve the economic security of women and families. Prohibiting employers from using wage history to determine an applicant's compensation, and requiring employers to provide the salary range for a position if the applicant requests it, will help ensure that women and people of color are paid a fair salary and that Maryland will move closer to closing the gender pay gap.

BPW/MD strongly urges the House Economic Matters Committee to support HB 123.

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