

Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

Testimony of Whitney Parrish

Maine Women's Lobby

In Support of LD 480

An Act To Ensure Pay Transparency and To Reduce Gender and Racial Wage Inequities

February 20, 2019

Senator Bellows, Representative Sylvester, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Whitney Parrish, and I am the Director of Policy and Program for the Maine Women's Lobby. The Maine Women's Lobby is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, statewide membership organization devoted to raising the economic, social, and political status of Maine's 678,000 women and girls.

I am pleased to speak to you today in support of LD 480, An Act to Ensure Pay Transparency and To Reduce Gender and Racial Wage Inequities.

As we have recently discussed, women in Maine who work full time, year-round, regardless of industry or occupation, are paid only 82 cents for every dollar paid to men—and for women of color, the wage gap is even larger.ⁱ To combat wage discrimination and pay inequity effectively, it is critical to acknowledge the diverse ways pay disparities arise in the workplace and respond with a wide range of solutions. LD 480 offers one of those solutions through requiring certain businesses to calculate the median annual wage for employees by gender, race and ethnicity within different job categories and make the information public.

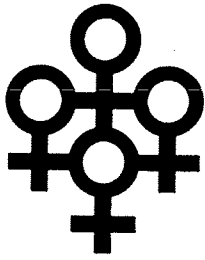
One way this begins to reduce inequity is through supporting the wage discrimination claim process. It can be extremely difficult to successfully make a claim under equal pay laws. A plaintiff or complainant must be aware of the pay of other workers which, although they are legally entitled to know, is not always available and whistleblowing carries personal and professional ramifications. Employers submitting wage data reports to the Maine Human Rights Commission, the state agency charged with enforcing the Maine Human Rights Act (MHRA), would ensure that this documentation is on file for reference and hopefully used when investigating, conciliating, and litigating protected-class discrimination cases under the MHRA.

ⁱ *The Wage Gap, State by State*. National Women's Law Center. 2018. Accessed at <https://nwlc.org/resources/wage-gap-state-state/>

295 Water Street, Suite 10, Augusta, ME 04330 • 207.622.0851

wparrish@mainewomen.org

www.mainewomen.org



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Transparency and accessibility of pay data is not only beneficial to workers who have potentially been discriminated against. By calculating wage gaps and submitting data reports, employers will begin to ask themselves questions about how to ensure that their workers are being paid equitably so that “equal pay for equal work” is not just a sentiment, but a true practice. Elevating and ensuring the economic security of women, marginalized people and families benefits all of us and leads to more thriving communities and a healthy economy.

We encourage you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 480. Thank you.

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