

# Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

**Testimony of Whitney Parrish  
Maine Women's Lobby  
In support of LD 278  
An Act Regarding Pay Equality  
February 6, 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 278, *An Act Regarding Pay Equality*.

Maine women are typically paid 82 cents for every dollar paid to their male counterparts.<sup>1</sup> For women of color, this disparity is even steeper.<sup>2</sup> Workers should be valued and compensated based on their skills, experiences, credentials and responsibilities they will be assuming regardless of their sex or gender identity, race, or disability. The bill before you will begin to eliminate discriminatory barriers to pay equality, increase economic security for Maine women and families and create a more thriving Maine overall.

On average, Maine women who are employed full time lose a combined total of nearly \$3 billion every year due to the wage gap.<sup>3</sup> That money does not get spent in our local economy, and it is not money that goes toward supporting our families. If the annual gender wage gap were eliminated, a woman working full time in Maine would have enough money, on average, to purchase 11.6 months of child care, 9.6 months of rent, and 0.8 additional years of tuition and fees from a four-year public university.<sup>4</sup> The aggregate benefits to closing the wage gap are clearly substantial. Allowing Maine women to work fully and equally in our economy is not only the right thing to do, but it helps every one of us.

---

<sup>1</sup> *America's Women and the Wage Gap*. National Partnership for Women and Families. September 2018. Accessed at <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/workplace/fair-pay/americas-women-and-the-wage-gap.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Id.

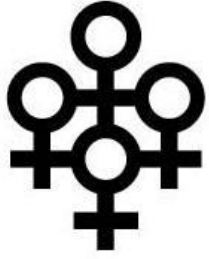
<sup>3</sup> *Maine Women and the Wage Gap*. National Partnership for Women and Families. April 2017. Accessed at <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/workplace-fairness/fair-pay/4-2017-me-wage-gap.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> *What's the Wage Gap in the States?* National Partnership for Women and Families. 2018. Accessed at <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/workplace/4-2018-wage-gap-map.html>

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

[wparrish@mainewomen.org](mailto:wparrish@mainewomen.org)

[www.mainewomen.org](http://www.mainewomen.org)



# Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

The federal Equal Pay Act and Maine's Equal Pay Act prevent employers from discriminating through unequal wages on the basis of gender when workers are in comparable roles with similar skills and responsibilities. While these laws are both necessary and critical, they do not address the all-too-common practice of basing future pay off past salaries, which perpetuates wage gaps. Reliance on salary history in hiring practices allows for past discrimination based on gender and other factors to follow workers from job to job. A rapidly increasing number of states and localities are prohibiting employers from seeking salary histories, and businesses are finding the practice neither necessary nor beneficial.<sup>5</sup> Our equal pay laws are also lacking because studies show that women are not the only classes of workers struggling to obtain equal wages in our workforce; race and disability are also characteristics that result in wage disparities.<sup>6</sup>

We must work toward ensuring that employers are hiring based off their own, internal criteria, not an employee's past wages, as this bill would require. When employers continue to use prior salary as criterion in the hiring process, historically underpaid workers cannot improve their financial circumstances. Past experiences of implicit and explicit bias and discrimination follow them indefinitely, and they are ultimately less likely to economically thrive. We urge you to support this critical measure. Thank you.

---

<sup>5</sup> *Asking for Salary History Perpetuates Pay Discrimination from Job to Job*. National Women's Law Center. December 2018. Accessed at <https://nwl.org/resources/asking-for-salary-history-perpetuates-pay-discrimination-from-job-to-job/>

<sup>6</sup> Patten, Eileen. *Racial, Gender Gaps Wages Persist in U.S. Despite Some Improvement*. Pew Research Center. Accessed <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/01/racial-gender-wage-gaps-persist-in-u-s-despite-some-progress/>

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

[wparrish@mainewomen.org](mailto:wparrish@mainewomen.org)

[www.mainewomen.org](http://www.mainewomen.org)