



COMMISSION FOR WOMEN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CLUSTER

February 12, 2020

The Honorable Dolores G. Kelley, Chairwoman
Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: 217, Labor and Employment—Wage History and Wage Range--SUPPORT

Dear Madame Chair and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Montgomery County Commission for Women (“Commission”). We urge a favorable report for SB 217, Labor and Employment--Wage History and Wage Range. The Commission is comprised of 15 members from the community who are charged by law to advise the County Executive, County Council and others on issues affecting women.

The state of Maryland has long been a leading champion for working women. This legislative session provides another opportunity for Maryland to join a growing vanguard of equity-minded states, municipalities and employers committed to setting pay based on performance expectations, skills and experience, not on arbitrary factors. In Maryland, women earn an average of 86 percent of what their male counterparts earn, which translates into a compounded lifetime earnings disparity of about \$400,000 for the average working woman in Maryland. In short, the explained and unexplained factors driving the gender wage gap, including disproportionate caregiving responsibilities, predispose women to a competitive salary disadvantage at every job transition over the course of their working lives, a disadvantage that is exacerbated by the common practice by hiring officials of using salary history to set pay.

Members of the Commission, like so many of the working women in our communities, report experiencing the negative implications of this practice firsthand. Several years ago, one of our members accepted a job with fewer travel demands that allowed her to better balance family obligations, a move that also corresponded with a sizeable reduction in pay. When she competed for a new, better-paying job a few years later with a different employer, she was told by the employer's recruiter that she would only negotiate using the salary from her most recent job, despite her ability to document longer-term average earnings. As a result, she withdrew her name from consideration in favor of a different opportunity, but we are well aware that many women do not have that luxury.

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It's time for us to follow the lead of fellow policymakers in 13 states, as well as municipalities like Montgomery County, and take the next step in eradicating the insidious inequality that has prevented generations of working women from earning a fair day's pay for a hard day's work.

Sincerely,



Nicole Y. Drew, Esq.,
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