

Testimony of
Oluwakanyinsola Shonibare, Student, University of Maryland College Park
In SUPPORT of SB 217 – Labor and Employment—Wage History and Wage Range
Before the Maryland Senate Finance Committee

February 13, 2020

My name is Oluwakanyinsola Shonibare, but I go by Kanyin. The last time I was here, I was 17 years old. I'm 18 years old now, and a sophomore at the University of Maryland College Park. Still with the same passion and desire for this bill to pass.

According to a 2011 McKinsey report, men are promoted based on potential, while women are promoted based on past accomplishments. As a woman, I have firsthand experience of always having to go the extra mile to get a fraction of what men are given. I use the word given because I know that sometimes success for men can come more easily than for women as a result of bias and discrimination.

It's extremely sad that society has made a conscious effort to undermine my worth next to a man's. But more so, as a black woman, I face an even greater form of oppression because now, society not only invalidates me because of my gender, but because of my race too.

Regardless of the immense effort we, women, put in, we continue to earn less than men in the workplace and something needs to be done about that.

As a young woman working towards becoming an active part of the working population, I strongly stand behind Senate Bill 217, which would stop employers from asking job applicants for their salary history. Employers often base a starting salary on someone's previous earnings, so at each job, the gender pay gap continues, and it becomes seemingly impossible for women to catch up.

But the truth is the requirement to provide salary history is not only backwards, but limiting. How can women move forward if employers keep trying to tie them to a past of employee underappreciation? Negotiation without the precedence of salary history will become much easier to work out because now it is based on what actually matters--evaluating the financial resources available, the worth of that potential employee and fairness to them and the amount of work they will put in for the company.

I intend on becoming an international corporate lawyer, and I find it imperative that I am able to feel confident in the Maryland salary system, trusting that I will be paid based on what I have to offer as an employee and not what my past salary was.

Eliminating the question of salary history gives a lot of women, like me, the opportunity to have our salaries impartially determined, giving us room to grow and work our way up the professional ladder.

I believe the passing of this bill will help boost my chances of achieving financial security at a young age and keep me from earning less than I deserve.

I especially appeal to the men in the room, to acknowledge the great privilege that you have and use it to fight for us, women, some without a voice or a pedestal to stand on. And to the women in the room, we all know there's nothing more unstoppable than a woman who knows her worth. So please help me realize mine.

I urge you all to get behind Senate Bill 217 and vote for its passing.