



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 217

Labor and Employment - Wage History and Wage Range

Senate Finance Committee

February 13, 2020

Submitted by Stacey Jefferson and Margo Quinlan, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

Advocates for Children and Youth
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Marylanders Against Poverty

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Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) supports House Bill 123 because it provides another tool for reducing the gender wage gap. A woman working in Maryland makes only 86 cents for every dollar made by men in comparable jobs, on average. This wage disparity is even greater for women of color. African American women make 68 cents, and Latina women make only 47 cents for every dollar paid to a white man doing comparable work. SB 217 would build on past legislation aimed at reducing the wage gap by prohibiting employers from basing an employee's pay on their past wages. This ensures that past wage discrimination doesn't continue to lower a person's earnings for their entire career – a phenomenon that is well documented in research.

Closing the pay gap is also a potential way to help people experiencing poverty earn higher wages as they gain experience in the workforce. Women and people of color, who would most benefit from the provisions in SB 217, are much more likely to have incomes below the federal poverty line. More than 19 percent of female-headed households in Maryland had incomes below the poverty line in 2018 (\$25,100 for a family of four), compared to about 10 percent in the state overall. In addition, about 13 percent of Black and Latino Marylanders had incomes below the federal poverty line.

The income that women could potentially gain if pay was equal could help them put food on the table, pay their rent, or pay for education. Ensuring employers can't pay people less solely because of their prior earnings is an important next step in Maryland's ongoing efforts to increase pay equity and close the gender pay gap.

MAP appreciates your consideration, and urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 217.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.