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**SB217**  
**Labor and Employment - Wage History and Wage Range**  
**Senate Finance Committee**  
**Hearing: February 13, 2020 - 1pm FAVORABLE**

Chair Kelly, Vice Chair Feldman and Members of the Finance Committee, I want to thank you for your service to Maryland Residents and for your efforts to provide economic stability in Maryland's financial markets. While unemployment rates are touted as having remained at an all-time low in the US, the salary gap between women and men and between white men and women of color is at an all-time high. While white males are afforded the opportunity to work one job 40 hours per week, women and people of color often have to work two or three jobs or have to work an equivalent of 22 more months in a year to earn what that same white male make with one salary. Therefore, while unemployment is at an all time low, the time is now for Maryland to pass laws that will equalize salaries by doing away with tactics used by employers to suppress the pay of women and people of color, which harms Maryland families and the state economy.

While most of the testimony today has focused on various trade industries, I want to talk about the wage gap in the legal industry to demonstrate how, women of color are dealing with the terrible pay gap problem. By way of background, I have practiced law for over 20 years, most recently I served as the General Counsel for a global cement manufacturer and I have served on various diversity and inclusion bar boards, in three states, and I am currently on the board of the National Bar Association Women Lawyers Division, while all my statements are made in my own capacity. While many would applaud anyone for becoming a lawyer, because you must pass the LSAT, get through law school and then pass very difficult bar exams, for women of color this so-called prestige is not reflected in our salaries. Women lawyers of color in 2020, are still mistaken for secretaries and court reporters while on the job.

Let's talk the numbers, many law students leave law school with school debt as high as \$250,000, but the average salary for a starting lawyer is just over \$45,000 in Maryland for public interest or government jobs according to the ABA reports, and the salaries are bit higher \$60,000 to \$90,000 when a lawyer job is with a law firm or corporation. Please note that a journeyman plumber in Maryland can start making the same pay as a lawyer in Maryland. While the beginning salaries may start the same, it is when women lawyers have worked over five years that the data shows that these women see a drastic gap between their salaries and the salaries of their white male counterparts. According to the ABA, there is an average pay gap for women lawyers of color and white men of up to 40%. So, after seven years that women of color may see a rise in her salary to \$90,000, which is what an average tech person without a doctorate degree or having to pass a state bar exam makes, her white counter-part will make over \$130,000 for law firm or corporation jobs. According the Montgomery County website, the mean income needed to live in the county is approximately \$83,000. So, it takes a women lawyer of color seven years just to make the mean income needed to live in Montgomery County,

which according to Indeed in Montgomery County a journeyman plumber can earn up to three times the amount of a women lawyer of color.

Because the earning capacity for women lawyers of color is so low in the legal profession, last year we saw the fewest number of law students of color entering law school. Also, women of lawyers of color leave the profession at a 50% attrition rate, and as of October, I was told by one woman lawyer of color who testified during the D.C. hearing on a bill that would have legalized prostitution, that she goes to Vegas to perform escort services to make up for her huge pay gap so she can pay off her loans. This beautiful young lady said that she may leave the profession because she can make way more money in prostitution than what she makes as a lawyer. This is a shame! While many believe that there are too many lawyers in the U.S. because there are so many law schools in the Maryland DC area, the ABA reported back in 2014 there are not enough lawyers in the U.S., which accounts for why Kim Kardashian is studying to take the California bar without going to law school. Lawyers of color only make up approximately 8% of all 1.4 million lawyers in the U.S. We need our lawyers of color.

Furthermore, as part of my voluntary work with the Women Lawyers Division of the NBA, I mentor women lawyers of color and over and over I am told that women lawyers of color are asked for their salary history on applications when seeking legal industry employment. Alternatively, they are also asked to provide on applications, what are their salary requirements and if those requirements are too high, they are not even given an interview. I had one young lady apply for a policy counsel position this past organization October for a non-profit and when she was asked for her salary expectations, she told the white male interviewer that she would accept whatever is the highest salary that they could pay. When pressed for more details, she said that she would accept whatever the salary the white male interviewer made. Needless to say, she did not get the job and she found out from one of the women who works as a policy analyst (a nonattorney position) at the organization that the interviewer told the company that the women demanded a salary that was “too high” all because she said asked to be paid equal to the white male interviewer.

Another mentee shared with me, just this past January that she had a phone interview with a big real estate REITE company in Bethesda and she was told that they would not let her continue to the next round of interviews because she had more experience than the companies Chief Legal Counsel and that the company had a policy of not interviewing or hiring lawyers who have more experience than the Chief Counsel.

In summary, SB217 only requires employer to do two simple things, stop asking for salary history and to provide a pay range for each job. While companies have more sophisticated tactics for excluding women or paying them less, the passage of this bill will give women of color who try to seek higher income earning jobs, hope for better pay but an incentive to stay in the profession and not leave.

Sincerely,

Jo Saint-George, Esq.  
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