



The Equal Pay Act

While gender wage gaps persist across the country, Pennsylvania women are worse off than the national average. Without simple corrective policies that close gaps in current equal pay law, American women, on average, will not achieve equal pay until 2059. Pennsylvania women, on average, are not on track to earn equal pay until the year 2068.

Wage gaps are worse for women of color than white women. White women will not see equal pay until 2056, while Black women will not see pay equity until 2124. Hispanic women must wait 231 more years until 2248.

In Pennsylvania, women typically make only 79 percent of the median annual wages made by men working full time, year round. African American women and Latinas typically make only 68 percent and 56 percent, respectively, of the wages white, non-Hispanic men typically make for full-time, year-round work.

Women are still paid less than men in nearly every occupation. Even controlling for race, region, unionization status, education, experience, occupation, and industry, as much as 38 percent of the pay gap remains unexplained. Men even earn more in predominantly female occupations.

Current Law Fails to Adequately Address Pay Discrimination

Pennsylvania adopted the Equal Pay Act in 1959. The current law has not been updated since 1967, when it was amended to reduce the number of Pennsylvanians to whom it applied. Pay discrimination is difficult to detect while it is happening, and difficult to legally prove once detected. About 60 percent of workers in the private sector nationally are either contractually forbidden or strongly discouraged from discussing their pay with their colleagues.

The Pennsylvania Equal Pay Act must be strengthened to address these obstacles to equal pay. Legislation must limit the factors other than sex that employers can use to justify paying men more than women for performing comparable work to those that are job-related and not sex-based. It must prohibit wage secrecy, improve remedies, and expand the population protected by the law.

Warning: SB241 is a Fake Fix

Senate Bill 241 has been advertised by its sponsors as strengthening the Pennsylvania Equal Pay Act. **It does not.** If passed, SB 241 will not protect women in Pennsylvania from receiving unequal pay for comparable work, and it will not protect employees from retaliation for talking about their wages. All this bill will do is take away control from local governments by preventing them from passing genuine legislation aimed at eliminating the gender wage gap.

Equal Pay is Essential for Economic Security

Women are the primary or sole breadwinners in 40% of households in the United States, yet our state policies enable workplace sex discrimination. When the Pennsylvania Legislature fails to support working women by taking simple steps to address discrimination, they are failing Pennsylvania families.

Equal pay is not just an issue of equality, it is an issue of quality of life. The wage gap typically translates into \$10,762 less in median annual earnings for women, depriving an average American family of four of approximately one year of groceries.

Over the course of her career or a 40-year period, a woman working full-time, year round typically loses \$430,480 due to the wage gap. Equal pay would reduce poverty by half for all families with a working woman as well as working women who live alone.

Addressing Pay Discrimination is Essential for Workplace Equality

Despite holding public hearings where lawmakers reviewed evidence of the gender wage gap, the Legislature has refused to adequately close the loopholes in Pennsylvania's equal pay law—while also refusing to move bills that would raise the minimum wage, address pregnancy discrimination in the workplace, and protect nursing workers.

The Pennsylvania Legislature's refusal to support working women harms Pennsylvania's children and their families.

Fixing Pennsylvania's Equal Pay Act is a priority of the Pennsylvania Campaign for Women's Health, a group of more than 55 state, local and national organizations working together to improve the health and economic security of women and girls in Pennsylvania.

For More Information

For more information about equal pay policy in Pennsylvania or the Pennsylvania Campaign for Women's Health, contact Tara Murtha of the Women's Law Project at tmurtha@womenslawproject.org and 215.928.5762.