

Kate Brown
Governor



Oregon Commission for Women
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April 7, 2015
House Committee on Business and Labor
Request for work session for HB 2006

Chair Holvey, Vice Chairs Barton and Kennemer and members of the Committee:

During this important legislative session we request that the leadership of the House Business and Labor Committee authorize a work session for HB 2006 so that it the bill may move on to the Senate for further consideration. The Oregon Commission for Women strongly supports HB 2006 which allows the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries to build existing equal pay law into civil rights law as well as the current wage and hour laws and provide tools for employers to become full partners in addressing this longstanding issue.

The equal pay statistics are stark. Despite current statutory protections, women in Oregon still earn roughly 79 cents for every dollar a male earns, which is only slightly better than the national average of 77 cents. This disparity is more acute when comparing average incomes of white males with minorities, especially minority women. African American women are paid 64 cents and Latinas are paid 54 cents for every dollar a white male earns. Oregon's highest paying jobs are male-dominated, and even in the only high-earning occupational category in which women hold a majority of positions, women earn only 63.8 cents to every dollar of their counterparts.

Oregon women are being short changed; this gender pay gaps affects short-term earning, long – term savings, retirement benefits, housing security and educational opportunities. With two thirds of working women as primary or co-breadwinners in their families, pay inequality impacts adults and children who depend on women's incomes.

The Oregon Commission for Women sees HB 2006 as a critical step towards achieving equal pay for equal work with business and industry as partners in this important policy measure. On behalf of the women of Oregon, we thank you for all the support you can provide for HB 2006 to ensure its move to the next stage of the legislative process.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Vardavas, Chair

OR Commission for Women

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