

Testimony of Eric W. Gjede
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Before the Committee on Labor and Public Employees
Hartford, CT
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Testifying in opposition to HB 6850 An Act Concerning Pay Equity And Fairness

Good afternoon Senator Winfield, Representative Tercyak, Senator Hwang, Representative Rutigliano and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Eric Gjede and I am assistant counsel at the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA), which represents more than 10,000 large and small companies throughout the state of Connecticut.

CBIA supports the intent of HB 6850, but believes the proposal put forward here will create more issues than it resolves.

We can all agree that gender should not be a factor in determining one's wages. However, it is legitimate for a business to pay different wages to an employee based on their skills and experience. Simply because one employee has the same title as another is not an indication that they provide the same work product for the employer or bring the same value. Allowing employees free reign to compare their wages can lead to morale issues within the workplace. For example:

1. It allows for an employee to inquire about another employee's salary, but can lead to conflict because it makes no change in the law prohibiting an employer from sharing information through the personnel files law.
2. It ignores the possibility that an employee may improperly access another's wage and salary information, and creates problems for an employer who attempts to stop that employee from disclosing their findings.
3. The remedy for a violation of this section is court action, which could result in litigation threats and fishing expeditions by an employee's attorney. If this is attempting to address discriminatory behaviors, then remedy should be an action to the CHRO.
4. It prevents an employer from disciplining an employee who repeatedly asks another about their salary in an unwelcomed, harassing manner.

As a result of the high likelihood of problems arising as a result of this bill, we urge the committee to take no further action on HB 6850.