



University of Connecticut
Department of History

2/16/17

Labor and Public Employees Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3800
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Connecticut House Majority Leader, Matt Ritter and the Chairmen of the Labor and Public Employees Committee,

On behalf of the Greater Hartford chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., the first African American sorority in the United States and the first chapter in the state of Connecticut, I write to express serious concerns about our state's wage gap, and to urge you to move forward, boldly, on the Proposed House Bill No. 5591, an Act Concerning Pay Equity in the Workforce.

AKA works to advance and support policies to improve the health, education, social and economic well-being of women and children, in particular, and their families and their communities, in general. We host a series of community service programs and promote active civic engagement. We have a strong interest in promoting and supporting the government's role in protecting the rights of women and families. But, I do not write this letter as solely a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha, but as an African American woman, a Connecticut taxpayer, and a full-time educator. I am appalled at the indolent pace to make our state's workforce equitable for all.

According to the *Center for American Progress*, a woman working full-time earns nearly \$500,000 less than a man over the course of her career. More specifically, according to the recent 2017 report by the American Association of University Women (AAUW), "In 2015, women working full time in the United States typically were paid just 80 percent of what men were paid, a gap of 20 percent." Policymakers have debated the accuracy of these statistics, but one thing that is clear, in the state of Connecticut, women are paid 83 cents for every dollar paid to men, amounting to an annual wage gap of \$10,679. This is unacceptable. But, I would ask this committee go deeper and take a more critical view of this problem by considering how race and other factors impact this conversation. Within the last 40 years, there have been great strides made in the fight for gender equity; however, within the various movements and policies put forth, the experiences of women of color have been largely on the margins.

In the US, according to the AAUW's 2017 report, Hispanic, American Indian and Alaska Native, African American, and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander women had lower median annual earnings compared with non-Hispanic white and Asian American women. Particularly, in Connecticut, the wage gap is more abysmal for African American and Latina women. Among Connecticut's women who hold full-time, year-round jobs, African American women are paid 59 cents, Latinas are paid 48 cents and Asian

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women are paid 80 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men. As an African American woman, I find these statistics reprehensible.

I provide these numbers because I understand we live in a data-driven society. However, I would like to note that the lived experience of these women and families need to be considered in this bill. The reality of a woman making a decent living for herself and her family making 48 cents is unconscionable. Making 59 cents is not just a labor issue, this wage gap impacts career prospects, food security, educational opportunities, access to quality healthcare, every aspect of her life is impacted by this gap. I respectfully request that you endorse this bill with fervor that not only considers Connecticut women overall, but elevates the unique positioning and vulnerabilities of women of color in this state. Working women contribute to the development of this State, in every field and industry. Our labor matters. I apologize for not being able to deliver this testimony in-person, however, my work schedule does not afford me the opportunity to join you. I along with the women of this state count on this committee to safeguard our futures and do the right thing to make our state's workforce equitable.

Sincerely,
Brittney L. Yancy, M.A.
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