



March 30, 2017

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the more than 170,000 bipartisan members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I urge you to become an original cosponsor of the Paycheck Fairness Act and the Fair Pay Act. These bills would provide much-needed tools to battle the pervasive pay gap that affects so many women and people of color.

The gender pay gap is real, and it's not going away. It's not myth, it's math. While the gap has narrowed since the 1963 passage of the Equal Pay Act (EPA), progress has largely stalled in the 21st century. Women still only make an average of 80 cents on the white male dollar, and it's even worse for moms and women of color. The gender pay gap develops early in women's careers and then compounds through retirement. Controlling for factors known to affect earnings such as education and training, marital status, and hours worked, research found that college-educated women still earn seven percent less than men just one year out of college – even when they have the same major and occupation as their male counterparts.ⁱ Over time, the gap widens. Women 20-24 years of age take home, on average, 92 percent of what their male counterparts make on a weekly basis. By the time we compare 55-64 year olds, women take home only 76 percent of the wages of their male counterparts.ⁱⁱ

Many factors contribute to the pay gap, but there are also many creative solutions to tackle it. The Paycheck Fairness Act provides one of those solutions. The Paycheck Fairness Act updates and strengthens the Equal Pay Act of 1963 to ensure that it will provide effective protection against sex-based pay discrimination in a 21st century workplace. The comprehensive bill bars retaliation against workers who voluntarily discuss or disclose their wages. It closes loopholes that have allowed employers to pay women less than men for the same work without a critical business necessity related to the job. It ensures women can receive the same robust remedies for sex-based pay discrimination that are currently available to those subject to discrimination based on race and ethnicity. It prohibits employers from relying on salary history in determining future pay, so that pay discrimination doesn't follow women or people of color from job to job. And it also provides much needed training and technical assistance as well as data collection and research.

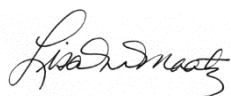
The Fair Pay Act offers an additional set of solutions aimed at curbing occupational segregation. By requiring employers to provide equal pay for work of equal value, whether or not the jobs are the same, this legislation addresses equal pay for women and men working in female-dominated jobs that are objectively rated equivalent to jobs traditionally dominated by men. The legislation would also ban retaliation, require employers to file wage information with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, eliminate the "gag rule" on wage disclosure, and prohibit employers from reducing the wages of higher earners (typically men) to comply with pay equity requirements.

The pay gap is persistent but can only be addressed if women are armed with the tools necessary to challenge discrimination against them, and employers are provided with effective incentives and technical assistance to comply with the law. AAUW continues to advocate for strong pay equity legislation, regulation, and enforcement to protect employees and assist employers. Both the Paycheck Fairness Act and the Fair Pay Act are comprehensive and critical components to closing the gender pay gap.

In addition to supporting the Paycheck Fairness Act and the Fair Pay Act, AAUW urges Congress to oppose any “faux fair pay” bills that ignore the realities that working women face when they seek to uncover and address pay discrimination. Proposals that do not adequately strengthen existing equal pay protections could actually be harmful to women by creating a false sense of security. Effective bills, such as the Paycheck Fairness Act and the Fair Pay Act, will provide a comprehensive approach to tackle all aspects of the gender pay gap. Any assertion that current law is “good enough” is naïve at best and disingenuous at worst. It is time to take real action and provide working families with a clear solution to address the real problem continuing to undermine the economic security of working families and our nation as a whole.

To become an original cosponsor of the Paycheck Fairness Act in the 115th Congress, please contact Liz Albertine in Rep. Rosa DeLauro's office at 225-3661. To become an original cosponsor of the Fair Pay Act, please contact Meagan Hatcher-Mays in Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton's office at 225-8050. Cosponsorship and votes associated with this legislation may be scored in the AAUW Action Fund *Congressional Voting Record for the 115th Congress*. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202/785-7720 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Lisa M. Maatz
Vice President for Government Relations and Advocacy

ⁱ AAUW. (2012). Graduating to a Pay Gap. <http://www.aauw.org/resource/graduating-to-a-pay-gap/>.

ⁱⁱ AAUW. (2017). *The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap*. <http://www.aauw.org/resource/the-simple-truth-about-the-gender-pay-gap/>