



April 6, 2017

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the more than 170,000 bipartisan members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I urge you to cosponsor of the Paycheck Fairness Act (S. 819) and oppose the Workplace Advancement Act (S. 345). AAUW continues to advocate for strong pay equity legislation, regulation, and enforcement to protect employees and assist employers. The Paycheck Fairness Act provides the most comprehensive and critical components needed to close the gender pay gap.

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 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.<sup>i</sup> 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.<sup>ii</sup>

Many factors contribute to the pay gap, but there are also many creative solutions to tackle it. The Paycheck Fairness Act (S. 819) 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 pay gap is persistent. It 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. The Paycheck Fairness Act would provide much-needed assistance to battle the pervasive pay gap that affects so many women and people of color.

In addition to supporting the Paycheck Fairness Act, AAUW urges the Senator to oppose the Workplace Advancement Act (S. 345) and 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, 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 dangerous 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.

Once again, I urge you to cosponsor the Paycheck Fairness Act and oppose the Workplace Advancement Act. 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

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

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