



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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CONTACT: Molly Woon (503) 986-1074
molly.woon@state.or.us

Senate Democrats support measure to promote equal pay for equal work

HB 2007 will protect workers from retaliation for discussing wage discrepancies

SALEM – The Senate approved legislation this morning that will protect workers by prohibiting employer retaliation against employees who discuss wages amongst themselves. Currently, workers in Oregon can face retaliation for sharing their wage and salary rate with their coworkers, or for raising their voice about their right to a fair wage. Threat of retaliation has been cited as an impediment to progress on equal pay for equal work for Oregon women.

“Oregon’s working women and their families deserve a fair shot to make a good living, and we must act now,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland), citing reports that without action, women will not reach equal pay until 2056. “House Bill 2007 will help alleviate persistent gender-based disparities, and ensure that no worker fears retaliation from their employer for starting conversations about wages.”

Rosenbaum chief-sponsored HB 2007, along with Rep. Jessica Vega Pederson (D-East Portland).

In 2014, the Oregon Council on Civil Rights found that, on average, women make 79 cents to every dollar a man makes. Minority women face an even greater gap in earnings. This has negative impacts on working families, but also on the state economy as a whole – when women have less purchasing power, the whole economy suffers.

“It is much harder to discover if you are being paid fairly if you can’t talk to your coworkers about wages. If you can’t find out how your pay compares to others who do the same work, you can’t advocate to be paid equally,” said Senator Michael Dembrow, chair of the Senate

Workforce Committee. “HB 2007 removes barriers so that women can learn about their wages and be in a better position to demand equal pay for equal work.”

The Society for Human Resource Management reported in September 2014 that businesses with wage transparency policies experienced:

- Improved staff retention rates;
- Increased workplace efficiency and work productivity;
- Greater trust between employers and employees; and
- Swifter resolutions of claims because they were easier to investigate.

“All workers deserve a fair shot at economic prosperity, and that means equal pay for equal work,” said Senator Sara Gelsler (D-Corvallis/Albany). “HB 2007 will ensure that wage inequality can’t be cloaked in secrecy, and hard working women are not punished for using accurate information to advocate for themselves.”

HB 2007 will now go to the Governor for her consideration.

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