



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Bill promotes study to make ‘equal pay for equal work’ a reality

SB 744 requires the Council on Civil Rights to study factors contributing to wage inequality in Oregon

SALEM—Citing the need to close the wage gap that exists between men and women, as well as wage equity for ethnic groups, the Oregon Senate today advanced a proposal to study the factors of and possible solutions to pay inequity. The measure, Senate Bill 744, passed on a 29-0 vote with one excused.

“Wage inequality between groups of Oregonians contributes to real problems for families including poverty and economic instability,” said Senator Chris Edwards (D-Eugene), chief sponsor of SB 744. “We need to closely examine the causes of this inequity so that we can act to remove barriers to equal pay for equal work.”

In Oregon, women earn 22% less than men for full-time work. Annually, the average Oregon woman earns \$36,000 in wages, while the average annual wages for a man are nearly \$46,000. According to 2011 American Community Survey data, nationwide Latina women make 54 cents to the dollar compared to what white men earn. For African American women, the figure is 64 cents on the dollar.

“Just last week on April 9th we commemorated National Equal Pay Day, which represents the additional three months women need to work to catch up with men’s earnings the previous year,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland). “This inequality is a huge problem for Oregon’s economy, and SB 744 will provide the tools to solve it.”

Senate Bill 744 will direct the Council on Civil Rights to conduct a study on wage equality and factors contributing to wage inequality in Oregon. The council is appointed by the Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor and Industries and is charged with the mission of monitoring the causes, effects, and solutions of unlawful discrimination in Oregon. Under SB 744, the council must complete the wage inequality report and present it to a legislative committee no later than December 1, 2014.

“We need to find ways to bolster and grow Oregon’s middle class by addressing income inequality and helping more Oregonians find secure, well-paying jobs,” said Senator Alan Bates (D-Medford). “I look forward to hearing recommendations to expand the middle class and help more Oregonians provide opportunities for their children.”

SB 744 will now go to the Oregon House of Representatives for consideration.

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