



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Women's Equality Day 2016

Leading the Way on Pay Equity and STEM Access for Women and Girls

[Sacramento, CA] Today marks the 96th anniversary of the Constitutional Amendment granting women the right to vote. The 19th amendment, which lifted the prohibition that denied citizens the right to vote based on sex, was ratified on August 18, 1920 and certified as law on August 26, 1920. While the right to vote for all women of color was not guaranteed until the passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965; today, we pause to celebrate momentous change and unprecedented advancement of women in politics and the private sector while looking forward toward even greater equity.

The California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls continues its 50-year tradition of serving and advancing women and girls in the Golden State. "Women have made tremendous gains the past 96 years, but there are still many bridges to cross, as women continue to lag behind in workplace equity and STEM achievement and opportunity," said Nancy Kirshner-Rodriguez, Executive Director of the State Commission.

The new California Pay Equity Task Force, launched by the Commission in July 2016 to oversee careful and meaningful implementation of the California Fair Pay Act (SB 358 Jackson), is working to "ensure that equal pay becomes the norm, the standard and the expectation in California for generations to come," said State Labor Commissioner and Task Force Co-Chair, Julie A. Su.

This year the Commission also continues its focus on educational equity with strategies to bring more girls into STEM education and ensure a highly qualified workforce for California's future. California is a global leader in industries involving Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). "It is time for California to become a global leader in female participation in STEM fields, too. We can make that a reality by welcoming female students to STEM education with role models, mentors and encouragement," said, Lupita Cortez Alcalá, Chair of the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.



The Commission has teamed up with the University of California Davis, TechNet and the America Association of University Women to bring the national STEM mentoring initiative Million Women Mentors to California. MWM CA has begun uniting young women and girls as prospective mentees with experienced mentors in STEM fields. Our goal is to pledge 50,000 mentors by 2018.

The Commission's strong partnership with the California Department of Education will expand in the coming months with the development of a gender-based STEM curriculum for teachers to encourage participation from girls in K through 12 public schools. This curriculum is a part of the Common Core Standards. In October we will join the CDE and co-host the annual statewide STEM Symposium in Anaheim. The Symposium will take place from Sunday, October 9, 2016 to Tuesday, October 11, 2016 at the Anaheim Convention Center. This meeting has become the largest annual gathering of STEM educators and STEM advocates in California. Following the Symposium we will also partner with the CDE on a series of town hall meetings across California that will address the inequalities women and girls face in STEM education and fields by discussing how we can better gain gender equity in education.

Together we can envision and achieve a future for California in which all children, regardless of gender identity, race and sexual orientation, are offered the same opportunities for advancement. Our future depends on our current efforts to confront old ways of thinking and replace them with progressive ideals that will achieve a better tomorrow.

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Commissioners — Lupita Cortez Alcalá (Chair), Assemblymember Cristina Garcia (1st Vice Chair), Lauri Damrell (2nd Vice Chair), Ofelia Alvarez-Willis, M.D., Kafi Blumenfield, Katie Buckland, Assemblymember Nora Campos, Geena Davis, Senator (Ret.) Martha M. Escutia, Marina Illich, Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin, Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson, Senator Carol Liu, Senator Holly Mitchell, Karen Nelson (Member-At-Large), Julie A. Su and Alisha Wilkins (Member-At-Large).