



Informational Hearing

THE ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON LATINA INEQUITIES
AND
CALIFORNIA COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

12:30 pm – 2:30 pm

San Diego County Administration Center, Room 310

1600 Pacific Highway

San Diego, CA 92101

CA's efforts to Advance Equal Pay and Recommendations

Holly Martinez, Executive Director, Remarks: (5 minutes)

Good Morning. My name is Holly Martinez and I serve as the Interim Executive Director of the California Commission on the Status on Women and Girls.

Thank you, Chairwoman Gonzalez, and members of the Committee for allowing the Commission to co-sponsor this hearing and to testify today on an issue that the Commission has pursued passionately for years – ending the wage gap for women, and particularly women of color.

In 2015, our former Commissioner and State Senator, Hannah Beth Jackson passed the California Fair Pay Act, one of the nation's toughest laws addressing the gender pay gap. In 2016 the Commission was trusted with convening the California Pay Equity Task Force which took a hard look at the wage gap for women. From this we built a substantial resource library and recommendations which we continue to implement through our Equal Pay Program and collaboration with the First Partner who has really been an incredible champion for this issue.

Every year the Commission honors a series of Equal Pay Days that reflect how long into the following year a specific group of women must work to catch up to what a White male made the previous year. Latinas have consistently come last, reflecting a deeply embedded issue in the fabric of America's workforce that must be addressed.



As leaders in this space, the Commission is deeply concerned with the impact that this persistent pay disparity, and the compounding issues of occupational segregation and the routine undervaluing of their work, is having on California Latinas.

The fact is Latinas face a pay gap that has barely budged in the last 30 years. In 1989, Latinas were paid just \$0.52 for every dollar paid to White men. Today, they average \$0.57 for every dollar paid to White men. In real terms, this means that the pay gap for Latinas has narrowed by just over one penny *every decade since 1989*.

It is unacceptable that in 2021 Latinas should face the single largest wage gap among women. The Commission supports women in the workplace – but those workplaces need to change.

In addition to trainings, we offer an opportunity to companies based in California to take the Equal Pay Pledge which asks businesses to commit to: Conducting an annual company-wide gender pay analysis, reviewing hiring and promotional processes to reduce bias and barriers and identifying and promoting best practices to eliminate the pay gap.

We are also engaging with policymakers and academic researchers on interventions to move California women forward.

There is an understandable desire to agree on and advance one “big fix” to all our economic woes when it comes to the gaps and inequality that we see. But there is no single reform that can reverse decades of harmful structural bias. Multiple reforms are needed, and they are needed now.

This past legislative session, the Commission supported policies such as Chairwoman Gonzalez’s AB 123 which would have increased the amount of income California workers would receive while using the state’s Paid Family Leave program to bond with a newborn, or care for a sick loved one.

When it comes to women’s economic security, the Commission will continue to be an advocate for policies that ensure that women workers’ interests are served, such as predictable and flexible scheduling, access to paid sick leave and childcare, strengthening protections against employer retaliation for workers who assert their rights, and access to a living wage.

We recognize the push for pay equity must move beyond prohibiting pay discrimination. This upcoming Legislative cycle we hope to partner with members of this Committee, the Legislature, and the Governor to advance measures related to requiring



“Opportunity Transparency” when it comes to Job Postings and filling Corporate Board seats. By ensuring that employers disclose compensation and benefits in job postings women can have a better sense of their negotiating power. In addition, removing backdoor appointments and opening Board application opportunities to the public, can ensure a pathway to service for those who are qualified but not connected.

The wage gap is largely caused by structural barriers that reduce Latinas’ expected earnings including segregation into lower-paying occupations and industries according to the Washington Center for Equitable Growth. Coupled with barriers in the form of occupational segregation, undervaluing of their leadership, bias, and glaringly, unequal pay for their labor, Latinas have far too often, come last in California.

Latinas in the U.S. are paid on average 45% less than White men and 30% less than White women. According to data from the National Partnership on Women and Families and Unidos US, **the wage gap costs Latinas \$29,098 each per year. That adds up to \$1.1 million dollars’ worth of lifetime losses over the course of her career.**

Lower earnings also mean that Latina workers and their families have had fewer resources to meet the devastating impact of COVID-19. According to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, close to six in ten Latinx households experienced loss of income due to the pandemic. Latinas are especially vulnerable to health hazards and income loss because they have the lowest health insurance coverage rate of any racial or ethnic group and the lowest likelihood of having paid time off.

Latinas are not projected to reach pay parity until the year 2224. We cannot wait another 200 years for more than 7 million California workers to reach equality!

Thank you for having me here today and I encourage everyone here to take a look at the resources we have compiled on this issue at www.women.ca.gov. We look forward to working together to lift Latina voices and to make sure that equity and opportunity for Latinas comes first at last.