



**Representative Kent Smith**  
**8<sup>th</sup> House District**

House Bill 138 Testimony

Economic Development, Commerce and Labor Committee

December 4, 2018

Chairman Young, Vice Chair Riedel, Ranking Member Lepore - Hagan and members of the Economic Development, Commerce and Labor Committee. Thank you very much for providing us an opportunity to explain why the creation of a Wage Equity Hotline would be good public policy for Ohio.

The first and primary reason a Wage Equity hotline is needed in Ohio is the simple fact that, women earn less than men. The reasons for this are fact are varied but the data is clear, and the creation of a pay Equity Hotline would be a simple way to begin closing the pay gap.

A study released just last week by the by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) entitled "Still a Man's Labor Market: The Slowly Narrowing Gender Wage Gap", concluded that the gender wage gap may underestimate pay inequality. The study used the Panel Study on Income Dynamics, a longitudinal dataset to look at the gender earnings gaps between men and women in 15-year time spans. When measured by total earnings across the most recent 15 years for all workers who worked in at least one year, women workers faced a wage gap of 51 percent in the 2001-2015 period. The analysis also found that while the long-term earnings gap has narrowed significantly since 1968, progress has slowed in the last 15 years.

While there is other data that suggests that the wage gap may be 80%, that is an annual figure. When looking at the income gap over multiple years, the wage gap grows considerably. As members of the Committee no doubt understand is no one only works one year – they work a lifetime.

Other research has acknowledged that the pay equity gap is closing in Ohio, but it is doing so at a snail's pace. At the current rate, it will take 50 years to close the gender pay gap in Ohio.

In January 2014, Barbara Ehrenreich, the author of the book, [Nickel and Dimed: On \(Not\) Getting By in America](#) wrote the following in *The Atlantic*. "For most women in poverty, in both good times and bad, the shortage of money arises largely from inadequate wages. When I worked on my book, Nickel and Dimed, I took jobs as a waitress, nursing-home aide, hotel housekeeper, Wal-Mart associate, and a maid with a house-cleaning service. I did not choose these jobs because they were low-paying. I chose them because these are the entry-level jobs most readily available to women.

What I discovered is that in many ways, these jobs are a trap: They pay so little that you cannot accumulate even a couple of hundred dollars to help you make the transition to a better-paying job. They often give you no control over your work schedule, making it impossible to arrange for child care or take a second job. And in many of these jobs, even young women soon begin to experience the physical deterioration—especially knee and back problems—that can bring a painful end to their work life.”

Ohio’s working women and others who suspect or discover wage discrimination in their workplace have no place to turn in order to file a complaint without fear of retaliation. A Pay Equity Hotline would be a free, anonymous, voluntary service provided by the Ohio Civil Rights Commission which would allow Ohioans to be able to report possible instances of wage discrimination. This could help compel employers to pay women an equal wage therefore closing the pay gap in less than 50 years.

I would like to thank the Committee for their collective attention. At this time, myself and my cosponsor would be happy to answer any questions that you all might have.