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Chair Lang, Vice Chair Wilkin, and members of the Senate Small Business and Economic Opportunity Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 232 to create fair paycheck workplace certificate with my joint-sponsor Senator Smith.

As I mentioned in my previous testimony, there are some staggering statistics around the reality of the gender wage gap in Ohio. The reality is that, when we fail to address this problem, it becomes a tidal wave that ripples throughout both our communities and individual lives. It impacts not only the longevity of our constituents, but also their ability to receive adequate compensation for the years that they spent dedicating their lives to working within our society. The 2021 Social Security factsheet states that nationwide, Women represent 55.2% of all Social Security beneficiaries aged 60 and older and approximately 63.3% of beneficiaries aged 85 and older. Despite knowing that women often perform at work with roughly the same credentials for the same time as their male counterparts, this fact sheet notes that in 2021 the average annual Social Security income received by women 65 years and older was \$14,204 compared to \$18,108 for men, less than 80% of what their male counterparts received.¹

With 53.3M people of the US's total almost 119M member workforce being women, roughly 45%, this income inequality has an enormous impact throughout the nation. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2022 Ohio's statistic of working women compared to the total workforce holds steady at about 45% with 1.8M women in a 4M person workforce.² Unfortunately, statewide our gendered wage gap falls even further behind the national average with Ohio women earning roughly 79¢ to a man's dollar, as opposed to the 84% average of women nationwide in 2021.³

¹ <https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/factsheets/women-alt.pdf>

² https://www.bls.gov/regions/midwest/news-release/womensearnings_ohio.htm#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20Ohio%20women%20who,of%20Labor%20Statistics%20reported%20today.

³ <https://www.aauw.org/resources/article/black-women-and-the-pay-gap/>

According to the Brookings Institute, Social Security, which provides over half of family income to 52% of the elderly and at least 90% of income for a quarter of elderly populations.⁴ The impact of this reality is once again a ripple effect with massive aftershocks. This means that either many elderly people face destitution despite devoting years of their life to working or their families are forced to fill in the gaps, which may exacerbate already dire financial straits.

When we think about addressing the gender wage gap, it is fundamental to remember that this is an issue that has affected about half of our population for generations. It's time to act on what we have always known to be true. A good start to this action is my joint-sponsored Senate Bill 232 which creates a program to recognize the work places that are already leaders in turning this tide for the better, and to incentivize the fight to create an improved Ohio for tomorrow.

SENATE BILL 232

Senat Bill 232 will implement a program that will be administered by the Ohio Department of Commerce to recognize workplaces that are succeeding at closing the pay gap between men and women. The program would allow workplaces to earn a “Fair Paycheck Workplace” designation from the Ohio Department of Commerce and be recognized as a leader in paycheck fairness.

Interested businesses would apply for the “Fair Paycheck Workplace” designation by submitting recent payroll records identifying their employees’ average earnings and genders. The designation would be earned by demonstrating that average earnings for men and women within the company are within 5 percentage points. These criteria would need to be met at the time of the application, six months following the initial application, and then could be renewed annually moving forward.

⁴ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-does-gender-equality-affect-women-in-retirement/>