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Committees:

Agriculture and Natural Resources - *Ranking*
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Judiciary - *Ranking*
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Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 77 to require a system for anonymous reporting of wage discrimination with my joint-sponsor Senator Smith.

In 2021, nationally American women made only 84% of what men made for doing the same jobs, with Ohio women even further behind. Ohio women were paid only 79% of what men in the state made according to the latest American Association of University Women report in 2022. Across the US, the statistics are even worse for minority women. Black women are paid [67 cents](#) for every \$1 paid to white men, - Hispanic and Latina women, as well as Native women, are paid only [57 cents](#).¹ The Institute for Women's Policy Research found in their 2021 Gender Pay Gap report that, if working women with the same education and professional credentials as their male peers were to be paid equal wages for the same number of working hours, poverty among working women in the US could fall by as much as 40%.²

A 2023 Report from the Center for Community Solutions shows that Median earnings for women in the labor force full-time year-round in Ohio is \$44,230--78.5% of the median earnings for men. Though still shocking, this number has shrunken by 2.4% statewide within the past 5 years. While this is a success that I don't take lightly, it is simply not enough. Furthermore, within 29 of our 88 counties within those same 5 years, the gender wage gap has actually widened. Compounding these numbers with the reality that 32% of all households in Ohio are woman-led, yet make up 59% of Ohio households in poverty: it quickly becomes clear that the gender wage gap has devastating effects on our communities across the state.³

¹ <https://www.aauw.org/resources/article/black-women-and-the-pay-gap/>

² https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Economic-Impact-of-Equal-Pay-by-State_FINAL.pdf

³ <https://www.communitysolutions.com/resources/economic-status-of-women>

When we think about the future of our constituents, if we have the opportunity to ensure better life for such a sweeping percentage of the people we serve, there should be no question as to what the right position is. The issue of Fair Wages should not be partisan, this is an issue that affects all Ohio women, regardless of any party lines. And despite the issue of fair pay being one that affects minority populations more than others, the truth is that roughly half of all working people in the Ohio will be impacted by this issue. That simply cannot stand. A better tomorrow means that we must encourage employers to honor the hard work of their employees today.

Our answer to this conundrum is Senate Bill 77.

SENATE BILL 77

[Senate Bill 77](#) establishes a toll-free equal pay hotline, an easily accessible, anonymous resource for Ohio workers to report wage discrimination and gather more information to find out if they could be victims of pay discrimination.

The Ohio Civil Rights Commission, where Ohioans can currently file individual or group charges of discrimination for investigation, would operate the pay equity hotline. Calls can be made anonymously through the hotline. Anonymity is not required but is an option for those who may fear retaliation from their employer for filing a complaint.