



March 4, 2015

KATE BROWN
Governor

The Honorable Michael Dembrow, Chair
Senate Workforce Committee
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Dembrow and Members of the Senate Workforce Committee:

I am writing in support of SB 491, which requires large state contractors to complete training on pay equity laws and protects contractor employees who discuss their wages. Throughout my career, I have been a champion of equity and justice. Paying women equal wages for equal work is simply a matter of fairness, and I am proud to support initiatives that help achieve equal pay for equal work.

According to a 2014 report by the Oregon Council on Civil Rights, women in Oregon earn 79 cents on the dollar compared to men's wages for similar work. This inequity is exacerbated for women of color. SB 491 will strengthen Oregon's anti-discrimination laws by requiring large state contractors to complete training on existing laws in order to bid on state contracts exceeding \$500,000.

SB 491 also prohibits retaliation against state contract employees who discuss their wage or salary information. Many workers may avoid discussing their pay with colleagues out of fear that their employer may retaliate against them. When women do not know what their colleagues are earning, it is difficult to know whether pay disparities exist. Establishing protections for workers who discuss their pay will make pointing out disparities on the basis of gender less onerous.

By holding our large state contractors to the highest standards, Oregon can help lead the way as an employer committed to pay equity as another strategy for helping eliminate bias and discrimination.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 491.

Sincerely,

Governor Kate Brown

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