

Senate Workforce Committee
April , 26th 2017

Sabrina Parsons Testimony in Support of HB 2005

Dear Chair Taylor and members of the committee,

As a woman and an employer, I believe it's important to have strong equal pay protections in Oregon. I am here today in support of HB 2005-A and strengthening our pay equity laws in a meaningful way. I am the CEO of Palo Software in Eugene, Oregon and employ 70 workers. BUSINESS BACKGROUND/ABOUT COMPANY/# of EMPLOYEES. I am also a board member for the Main Street Alliance, a network of over 3,500 small business owners.

As a woman in technology I have seen first hand how pay gaps are all too common for women and minorities. How often have we all seen news stories about this?

As an employer, I always take every step to ensure pay disparities don't exist in my business and that my employees are paid equitably for their work, regardless of their race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, marital status, disability or age. I also want to ensure that all businesses are taking the same steps and placing the same value on pay equity.

This bill contains two main provisions that, in my mind, should be existing best practice for responsible businesses everywhere and are a common sense approach to ending pay disparity. First, the bill precludes employers from inquiring about an applicant's salary history. When I recruit for a position or make an offer, I am posting a salary range and making an offer consistent with how valuable the position is to my business, and how that position fits into my current pay structure. I want to compensate people for the value that they bring, and not who they are. When job offers are based on an applicant's salary history, pay disparities can be exacerbated across employers and compound over a person's career. The easy way to avoid this is to preclude asking applicants about salary history. It will also prevent me, as an employer, from inheriting a history of pay disparity among similarly skilled applicants.

The second component of this bill creates meaningful standards to be applied when evaluating claims of pay disparity. The legislation gives clear guidance to employers and a solid definition of "work of comparable character" to evaluate job positions and classifications against. Under this legislation, jobs of comparable character must be paid equally, while also making room for legitimate business reasons for paying similarly situated employees differently (like pay differentials for required language skills, special certifications or required travel). By clearly laying out the standards by which pay disparities claims will be evaluated, employers can take corrective steps and avoid liability.

Implementing pay equity practices to identify and address pay disparities should be considered a best practice for all employers. HB 2005-A will strengthen our existing pay equity laws and encourage employers to take the right steps to evaluate and eliminate pay disparities in their

businesses.