

**REMARKS OF THE HON. ROSA L. DELAURO  
EQUAL PAY HEARING – COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR  
TUESDAY, APRIL 24, 2007**

Chairman Miller, thank you very much for the opportunity to testify before the Committee on Education and Labor this morning.

I want to thank you very much for stepping up and holding what is the first-ever hearing in the House of Representatives on equal pay. The very fact that it has taken this institution so long to confront our nation's wage gap is a sad illustration of how far we still have to go.

It is long overdue, but, the fact that we are here today is a welcome change. Your strong support represents the new priorities and new direction of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

How meaningful it is, as well, that we have gathered here you hold this hearing on this particular day. As you know, every April,

advocates for equal pay mark the day on which the wages paid to American women “catch up” to the wages paid to men from the previous year. This year that day is April 24th. It is time to look at the calendar and time to look at our own values as a nation.

To be sure, women have made great progress since the enactment of the Fair Pay Act more than 40 years ago. Today, nearly half the workforce is made up of women. Women are more likely to have an advanced degree than men. And there are more than 6 million businesses in America are owned by women

But for all those gains, a significant wage gap is still with us, and that gap constitutes nothing less than an ongoing assault on women’s economic freedom. We have a moral obligation to understand and explain the reasons behind that gap. And we must continue working tirelessly until we have closed it entirely.

According to the General Accountability Office (GAO) the weekly earnings of full-time working women were about three-fourths of men's during 2001.

The report was prepared from a study of the earnings history of over 9,300 Americans for the last 18 years. Even accounting for factors such as occupation, industry, race, marital status and job tenure, the GAO reports, working women today earn an average of 80 cents for every dollar earned by their male counterparts.

The issue of pay equity goes to the heart of what matters to working women. It is about ensuring that women who work hard and productively and carry a full range of family responsibilities are paid at a rate they are entitled. I often say pay equity is not a women's issue. It is a family issue.

In today's world, economic reality and economic insecurity mandate two-earner families, where possible. In many families, the

inequity of the pay gap falls hardest upon children, because so many working women are the primary breadwinners in their households. In fact, nearly two-thirds of working women provide half or more of their household income, and 41 percent of women are their families' sole source of income.

Short-changing women of their due, short-changes their entire families, undermines their dreams, and limits their hopes. Closing the wage gap must be an integral part of any pro family agenda.

As we will hear from American Academy of University Women today, even education does not significantly close the wage gap. A typical college-educated woman working full-time earned \$9,500 a year less than a college-educated man, sending the message that no matter how hard women work or how advanced their degree, they will not be compensated fairly.

No one should be forced to consider a trade-off between a full wage, a family life, and a good job. Yet that is what is happening. Men with children appear to get an earnings boost, while women get just the opposite. According to the GAO, men with children earn about 2 percent more than men without children, while women with children earn about 2.5 percent less than women without children.

We will also be hearing from a former Wal-Mart employee, and if you look nationwide, the only word to describe what is happening in their stores is: discrimination . Women hold 70 percent of sales associate positions at the retailer, but less than a third of management jobs. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Wal-Mart faces the largest class action lawsuit in history for these practices, with 1.6 million women in all filing suit.

That is one reason -- or perhaps it is 1.6 million reasons -- I have reintroduced *The Paycheck Fairness Act*, together with

Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, to help address this problem and give teeth to the Equal Pay Act. The marketplace alone will not correct this injustice -- that is why we need a legislative solution.

The bill would require the Department of Labor to enhance outreach and training efforts to work with employers to eliminate pay disparities. It would prohibit employers from retaliating against employees who share salary information with their co-workers and stiffen penalties for employers in violation of the Equal Pay Act. And it would require the Department of Labor to resume collecting and disseminating information about women workers and create a new grant program that would help strengthen women's salary negotiation skills.

Pay equity is not just another budget item to be bargained for, or bargained away. It is an integral piece of the larger effort we are all part of – an effort to help women gain economic security for themselves and their families.

This is a common sense issue that affects all women and their families. By erasing this gap in the labor market we can help families gain the resources they need to ensure their children have access to a better future in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We should not underestimate the power of one big idea whose time has come. And today, I look around and I think: our time has come. Our time is now. I know you will all continue to fight for what is right.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member McKeon, I look forward to your questions.