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New Pay Equity Initiative Announced

Press Conference on Tuesday, April 9, with Commissioners of Labor and DECD

Little Progress in 50 Years Since Passage of Equal Pay Act

HARTFORD – The State of Connecticut is embarking on a new initiative to study and seek remedies to the current gender-based wage gap among state workplaces. A Pay Equity Day press conference announcing efforts to investigate and address the wage gap in Connecticut will be **TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 11 a.m.**, at the Legislative Office Building (Room 2B) in Hartford.

Organized by the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), the conference will feature two State commissioners, Sharon Palmer of the Dept. of Labor, and Catherine Smith of the Dept. of Economic & Community Development. Gov. Dannel Malloy recently directed Commissioners Palmer and Smith to look into the current pay equity situation. Also speaking will be Jacqueline Cooke of the U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau. Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman will present a Pay Equity Day resolution.

As the General Assembly's public policy agency mandated to study women's issues, the PCSW has tracked pay inequity for years and has pointed out the need for research that would reveal where improvements need to be made.

“The best public policy flows from solid data, and we have been advocating for years that the State do just such a study of the wage gap,” said PCSW Executive Director Teresa Younger. “It’s gratifying to see an initiative out of the Executive Branch that builds upon our legislative work and which takes seriously this significant form of gender discrimination.”

In January of this year, Gov. Malloy asked Palmer and Smith to:

- (1) study the factors that contribute to the gender wage gap in Connecticut's private sector;
- (2) identify best practices that can be implemented to address the gender wage gap; and
- (3) make recommendations (by October, 2013) for actions that can be taken by businesses

to remedy this inequity.

“A competitive and business-friendly environment can mean many things,” said Catherine Smith, Commissioner of the Dept. of Economic & Community Development (DECD). “The issue of wage equity is one driver that warrants more investigation, especially as we work hard to improve the overall business climate. I look forward to working with Commissioner Palmer and our task force as we get a better understanding of the root causes of this gender discrepancy and focus on real and practical steps we can take to ensure a level playing field for all Connecticut residents.”

Since the Equal Pay Act was signed in 1963, the wage gap has been closing at less than one cent per year. In 2011, Connecticut full-time working women earned 78% annually of what their male counterparts earned, amounting to a yearly wage gap of \$13,229 between full-time working men and women in the state.

“National observance of Pay Equity Day – a time when we take note of the wage gap that still exists between working women and men in this country – should be a reminder that we need to end this pay disparity,” said State Labor Commissioner Sharon Palmer. “In Connecticut, where women comprise 47% of the workforce and are often responsible for ensuring the economic security of their families, promoting equal wages is key if we want to provide a better quality of life for all of our citizens. Clearly, Governor Malloy’s initiative to identify best practices for addressing the gender wage gap is vitally important to the economic and social growth of our state.”

Nationally, the wage gap hovers at around 80 cents for every male dollar earned, according to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Women’s Bureau.

“The U.S. Dept. of Labor is committed to eliminating the gender wage gap,” said Jacqueline Cooke, U.S. DOL’s Women’s Bureau Regional Director. “The year 2013 marks the 50th anniversary of the passage of The Equal Pay Act. It is critically important that we both celebrate the progress we have made since 1963 and continue to work toward full wage equality for women.”

“A lifetime of earning less pay not only means a smaller paycheck, but also means a retirement with less security for a woman and her family,” Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman said. “That is a fundamental economic disadvantage that is clearly unfair and needs to be dealt with so women can better support their families today and retire on equal footing with men.”

About the PCSW: The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women was formed in 1973 under Sec. 46a-1 of the Connecticut General Statutes to study and improve Connecticut women’s economic security, health and safety; to promote consideration of qualified women to leadership positions and to work toward the elimination of gender discrimination. As a non-partisan arm of the General Assembly, the agency monitors, critiques and recommends changes to legislation in order to inform public policy, and assesses programs and practices in all State agencies for their effect on the state’s women. The PCSW serves as a liaison between government and its diverse constituents, and convenes stakeholders, including the business, non-profit and educational communities, local governments, and the media, in order to promote awareness of women’s issues.