

Testimony on SB19-085

Thank you Chairwoman Kraft-Tharp and Vice-Chairman Coleman. Thank you Senators Pettersen and Danielson, and Representatives Buckner and Gonzales-Gutierrez for bringing this bill before us. My name is Michael Neil and I rise to strongly support SB 19-085 on behalf of myself and Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition. I rise as a labor activist, disability rights advocate, and tireless worker for equality.

One of the most important pieces of this bill is the ability is its allowance for civil action as a remedy for gender-based pay inequality. As a former DU student, I know how even forward-thinking businesses often try to escape punishment for unequal wage distribution because I saw it at our law school during the case of Lucy Marsh and her colleagues. Private right of action, whether we wish it were otherwise or not, was necessary. A further important step is the prohibition of seeking out wage-rate history. An allowance for this would allow for the perpetuation of one wage injustice across a career.

On a broader note, even though Colorado's wage discrepancy of 86 cents per dollar for Caucasian women marks the state as one on the relative forefront of wage equality, this is not yet wage equality. Furthermore, it speaks nothing of the far greater discrepancies for African-American (63.1 cents), Native American, and Hispanic women (53.5 cents). The effects of pay disparity compound over a woman's lifetime, with women losing between \$400,000 and \$1 million over the course of a lifetime due to the wage gap. Equal pay would cut the poverty rate for working women in half and reduce the poverty rate for employed single mothers by more than 40 percent.

Although CCDC is primarily a disability rights organization, we stand with our colleagues, nonprofit allies, and activist friends in gender equity and labor. To not stand in

strong support of this bill would be abandonment and, it is in this spirit that I ask for a firm
“Aye” vote on SB 19-085.