



## Written Testimony in Strong Support of House Bill

### 1378: Equal Pay for Equal Work Act

My name is Emily Alves. I am a Policy Associate with the Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR). COLOR works to engage and empower the Latinx community to speak out about the policies that impact our community. Together we are working to support the ability of Latinas and our families to build a future for ourselves and to live our lives with dignity.

I am here as an advocate for public health and economic justice to strongly support House Bill 1378, which would "Equal Pay for Equal Work Act" in order to implement measures to prevent pay disparities, and, in connection therewith, promoting pay transparency.

Closing the wage gap has a particularly dramatic impact on Latino families. Women in Colorado earn 79 cents for every dollar a man earns, but for Latinas, this rate is 52 cents on the dollar, half of what an average Colorado man earns. This represents the largest wage gap of any other group of working women. At this rate, to earn what white men earn by age 60, Latina women would have to work until they're 90.

Equal pay is a workplace issue, but it is also a family issue. A growing number of Latinas are the primary wage earners for their families. When women are not paid fairly, not only do we suffer, but so do their families.

A loss in income due to the wage gap means less money to support a family – less for housing, food, health care and education. This inequity impacts our communities long-term and keeps our families from attaining their full potential. Less income means that Latinas cannot put aside money for times of crisis or to build up savings for a college education for their children or for their own retirement.

This issue isn't going to go away without doing the hard work to create a road map and commitment to follow through. That is what this bill is looking to do - to put some real teeth behind equal pay laws and to lay out steps to help support an employee who is being paid less than a colleague.

The bill also supports salary transparency. If a woman can't find out if they are earning less than their male colleagues, they are unable to hold companies accountable for any wage disparities. And if you know what you're being paid and what your coworkers are being paid, it allows the conversation to at least begin and for workplaces to have real conversations about what it looks like to not only fairly compensate employees, but to push for a true living wage and the protections needed to support women and families.

Workplace discrimination and inequitable employment policies are forcing women of color and our families into a cycle of poverty that has harmful and lasting effects. This bill helps to ensure financial stability and fair opportunities for the Latinx community. This proposal is not only common sense, but is also an important step towards beginning to close the wage gap and helping the Latinx community to get by and to thrive.

The Latinx community, like all others, wants to be able to find a job that will provide a living wage so we can earn enough to provide for our families. You can help take action to by making sure that women are paid fairly. It is a critical first step to providing Coloradans the opportunity to recognize and fulfill our potential and live our lives with dignity. I strongly urge you to support House Bill 1378. Thank you.

**Submitted by: Submitted by:** Emily Alves, Policy Associate, Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR), 303-393-0382