

## Equal Pay for Equal Work Act (HB18-1378)

Testimony to the Senate State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee  
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Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

I'm Natalie Wood and I'm a senior policy analyst at the Bell Policy Center. The Bell Policy Center provides policymakers, advocates, and the public with reliable resources to create a practical policy agenda that promotes economic mobility for every Coloradan.

The Bell Policy Center supports HB18-1378 because it offers commonsense solutions to advancing pay equity, which greatly improves Colorado women's economic mobility.

The Bell toured the state last year to talk with and survey Coloradans on the top issues holding them back from getting ahead economically. Coloradans across the state indicated a lack of equal pay for equal work was a big issue, with an average score of 4.15 out of 5. Pay inequity spans our state within industries, occupations, and between educational levels. Data from National Partnerships shows full-time working women are paid less than their male counterparts across all seven of Colorado's congressional districts. Beyond this, women are not a homogenous group, our experiences greatly differ, especially by race and ethnicity, with women of color making even less than white women.

Increased transparency in pay would help correct these inequities and be a win-win for employees and employers. Currently, less than half of employees (47 percent) understand how their compensation compares to their colleagues, making it difficult for them to gauge whether they are being paid fairly and negotiate accordingly. Research conducted by the Colorado Pay Equity Commission shows when employers move toward transparent pay practices, they experience enhanced productivity, reduced turnovers, and more female applicants for management positions. Leading compensation experts say

increased transparency can also help HR professionals identify and correct gender pay discrepancies.

Equal pay for equal work makes sense for Colorado's economy. Our state is losing out on more than \$14.5 billion every year due to the gender pay gap. The over 200,000 female-led family households in Colorado have less to contribute toward strengthening their families and our economy. In our recent Guide to Economic Mobility, we discuss how increased pay equity could reduce the state's poverty rate from 5.6 percent to 2.8 percent. Additionally, data from the Colorado Pay Equity Commission shows equal pay for equal work would reduce the number of children on our CHP+ program by 14,000 and Medicaid program by 15,000, saving Colorado more than a combined total of \$11 million annually.

We should follow the Colorado Commission's recommendation from 2008 and implement a transparent pay system and aim to become a leader on pay equity.

We urge you to vote yes on HB18-1378, the Equal Pay for Equal Work Act. Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony and thank you Senator Donovan and Senator Fields for sponsoring such important legislation. I am happy to answer any questions.