



Erie County Legislature Democratic Caucus

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CONTACT: Erich Weyant | 716.796.1649 | erich.weyant@erie.gov

Erie County Observes All Women's Equal Pay Day with Support for a State Ban on Wage-History Discrimination

Day symbolizes how far into the current year women have to work in order to earn as much as men earned the previous year.

(BUFFALO, NY) Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz today joined Erie County Legislature Majority Leader April N. M. Baskin, Legislator Barbara Miller-Williams and Karen L. King, PhD., Executive Director of the Erie County Commission on the Status of Women ("ECCSW"), to mark All Women's Equal Pay Day. On average, women make .89 cents for every dollar made by a man. This gap increases among minority groups, and is compounded over the course of a woman's working life.

Majority Leader Baskin submitted a legislative resolution earlier today in support of legislation that overwhelmingly passed the State Assembly in 2017 but which is currently still under consideration by the New York State Senate. Assembly Bill A2040C and Senate Bill S6737A would prevent employers from using salary history to set wages for potential employees. Similar laws have already been enacted in California, Massachusetts and Delaware. Assembly Bill A2040C was approved by the State Assembly in June 2017 by a bipartisan 133-11 vote but has not been advanced in the State Senate.

"This legislation is helping to continue to place a spotlight on blatant discrimination between genders," said Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz. "I applaud Majority Leader Baskin and Legislator Miller-Williams for taking a leadership role and continuing my administration's efforts to eliminate wage history discrimination. We must continue to have an open discussion on this topic and make it clear to all employers that paying female employees less than male employees who do the same work is unacceptable in our community."

"Being undervalued in one job can condemn a woman to a cycle of suppressed wages for the rest of her career," said Erie County Majority Leader April Baskin. "Preventing employers from using an applicant's current salary to determine their prospective pay is one way to help break this cycle. A woman's salary should be based on her talent and experience, and the negotiating skills she brings to the table. This is why I am proud to submit this resolution today: we must let

our state elected officials know that this issue is important, and that we support their efforts. Banning questions about salary history will not end the pay gap, but it is an important tool in the fight.”

“In light of the tremendous strides women have taken in the workplace, it might seem as though concerns about wage inequality are a thing of the past,” noted Erie County Legislator Barbara Miller-Williams. “But the legacy of discrimination is a very real factor in the lives of women who are currently in the workforce. Consider women who were initially steered into lower paying jobs or industries, or were paid lower salaries than their male colleagues. They may have closed the gap later in their careers, but the initial disparity still may have an impact on their retirement accounts and Social Security benefits. I am proud to co-sponsor this resolution.”

“Public awareness about wage inequality is important because a woman’s salary should reflect on her individual skill set, education and previous experience and not her gender,” said Erie County Commission on the Status of Women Executive Director Karen King. “There is simply no excuse for undervaluing the efforts of an employee simply because of their gender. It’s unconscionable that five decades after the Equal Pay Act was signed that there are still some employers who don’t recognize the impact pay discrimination has on our entire community and how it negatively effects our local economy.”

Fifty-five years after the passage of the Equal Pay Act, women make .89 cents for every dollar paid to men. For women of color the gap is larger, with African-American women making 64 cents and Latinas just 54 cents for every dollar paid to men. Equal Pay Day was originated by the National Committee on Pay Equity (NCPE) in 1996 as a public awareness event to illustrate the gap between men's and women's wages.

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