

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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### Opening Statement Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney Full Committee Hearing “Honoring ‘Equal Pay Day’: Examining the Long-term Economic Impacts of Gender Inequality” March 24, 2021

Today is “Equal Pay Day,” but it is not a celebration. Today marks the extra days and weeks it takes American women to earn the same pay that their male counterparts made in the previous year. Three extra months of work, just to earn the same amount.

In 1963, when the Equal Pay Act was signed, women made 59 cents for every dollar earned by men. We have made some progress since then—but not nearly enough. Today in 2021, on average women are still paid only 82 cents for every dollar paid to a man.

The gender pay gap is even worse for many women of color. For every dollar paid to white men, Asian American women overall are paid 87 cents, Black women are paid 63 cents, Native American women are paid 60 cents, and Latina women are paid just 55 cents.

Today marks All Women’s Equal Pay Day, reflecting the average across races and ethnicities. Asian American and Pacific Islander Women’s Equal Pay Day is March 9th, Black Women’s Equal Pay Day isn’t until August 3rd, Native American Women’s Equal Pay Day isn’t until September 8th, and Latina Women’s Equal Pay Day isn’t until October 21st.

This is a disgrace, and it has long-term consequences for women and families.

The pay gap even reaches professional female athletes, who are paid significantly less than their male counterparts, even when they perform the same—or even better.

The U.S. Women’s National Soccer Team is incredibly successful—winning far more games than the Men’s team, including both the 2015 and 2019 Women’s World Cup. But U.S. Soccer pays members of the Women’s National Team as little as 38 cents on the dollar compared to the Men’s National Team.

I am grateful that today we will hear from World Champion soccer player and equal pay advocate Megan Rapinoe, about why we need to close the gender pay gap—not just for professional athletes, but for everyone.

Routinely earning less than we deserve impacts us for life. As Vice Chair of the Joint Economic Committee I released a report in 2016 showing that lower wages over a lifetime result in reduced Social Security and pension benefits, and makes it harder for women to save for retirement. Other research suggests that women also experience disparity in access to sources of incomes outside of salary and wages, such as employment benefits, that contribute to financial security and prosperity during a career. On average, women earn approximately \$900,000 less than men over their lifetimes.

We also know that economic insecurity makes women more vulnerable to other devastating circumstances like workplace sexual harassment, domestic violence, and abuse. Women working in low-wage jobs have even fewer workplace protections, making them and their families even more vulnerable.

The economic harm caused by longstanding gender inequalities has only been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. Women comprise a majority of health care and other social services workers, and have disproportionately shouldered the burden of the coronavirus pandemic. Women without access to paid leave have been forced to decide whether to forego income or step back from their professions in order to care for themselves or their loved ones.

Today we'll talk about reforms that promote an equitable and inclusive economic recovery for women across the U.S., so with our response to this crisis we can not only recover— but build a more equal future.

I am pleased that the Education and Labor Committee is marking up the Paycheck Fairness Act and other critical reforms today.

One of the most basic protections women are lacking in our country is constitutional equality. I have advocated for the Equal Rights Amendment for over 25 years. The ERA would establish freedom from discrimination on the basis of sex as a constitutional right. There is no other way to fully enforce equal pay for equal work in the courts unless we get the ERA, and it is one of many permanent, fundamental fixes we need to stem the tide of gender inequality in our country.

For millions of Americans, these issues are of vital importance. Ensuring an equitable recovery from the coronavirus pandemic requires facing the reality of gender inequality head-on. Our coronavirus recovery plans must set the stage for bold, transformative policy decisions that will bring us into a more equal future.

We cannot achieve recovery without equality.

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