



# OPENING STATEMENT

House Committee on Education and Labor

Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

## Opening Statement of Chair Alma Adams (NC-12)

Joint Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services and Workforce Protections  
*Fighting for Fairness: Examining Legislation to Confront Workplace Discrimination.*

Zoom

Thursday, March 18, 2021 | 10:15 a.m.

---

In addition to the *Pregnant Workers' Fairness Act* and the *Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act*, today's hearing will also examine the *Paycheck Fairness Act* and the *PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act*, both of which are partially or fully under the jurisdiction of the subcommittee on Workforce Protections.

These bills address issues of basic fairness for women in the workplace.

Today, women earn, on average, 82 cents on the dollar compared to all men. The wage gap is even worse for women of color. For example, Black women earn an average of 63 cents on the dollar, Native women earn an average of 60 cents on the dollar, and Latina women earn an average of 55 cents on the dollar compared to white men. The wage gap persists in nearly every line of work, regardless of education, experience, occupation, industry, or job title.

That is unacceptable. From the North Carolina House to the U.S. House, for three decades, I have been fighting to close the gender wage gap.

Fifty-eight years have passed since the *Equal Pay Act* was enacted, and it's been ten years since President Obama signed into law the *Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act*, yet the promise of equal pay for equal work remains unfulfilled.

The *Paycheck Fairness Act* is an opportunity for Congress to strengthen the *Equal Pay Act*, bolster the rights of working women, and put an end to the gender-based wage disparity once and for all.

The *Paycheck Fairness Act* would:

- Require employers to prove that a pay disparity exists for legitimate reasons;
- Ban retaliation against workers who discuss their wages;
- Allow more workers to participate in class action lawsuits against systemic pay discrimination;
- Prohibit employers from relying on the salary history of prospective employees, and
- Develop wage data collection systems and provide assistance to businesses to improve equal pay practices.

The House passed this legislation with support of 7 House Republicans in the 116th Congress, and we look forward to passing it again this year.

Nursing workers also need protections in the workplace to be able to maintain breastfeeding when they return to work.

More than ten years ago, the *Break Time for Nursing Mothers Act* was enacted, requiring employers to provide eligible nursing workers with unpaid break time and a clean, private space to pump. Unfortunately, gaps in the law limit the number of workers entitled to these protections and how workers can hold their employers accountable when they violate these requirements.

The *PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act* is a bipartisan bill that closes gaps that excluded nearly 9 million employees who are exempted from overtime protections. The bill also ensures nursing workers have access to appropriate remedies when their employers fail to provide break time and appropriate pumping space. It also clarifies that, if an employee is not completely relieved of duty during a break, that time is considered hours worked for the purposes of minimum wage and overtime requirements.

Every worker who chooses to nurse understands the importance of being able to express breast milk and the severe health consequences of failing to do so. This legislation is a simple improvement to existing law that will have a meaningful impact on nursing workers across the country.

I strongly support all four bills under discussion today and I will now yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Keller.