



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
In Support of H.1733 and S.983 – An Act to establish pay equity
By Carole Pelchat – LWVMA Legislative Director
July 21, 2015

Since its inception almost 100 years ago, the League of Women Voters has worked for equal rights and social reform and was one of the first organizations to address laws and social policy that discriminate against women.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) has supported the work of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) since 1945, when it was called the Fair Employment Practices Commission, to remove discrimination in areas of education, housing, and employment.

While Massachusetts is now among the top states for women workers when it comes to earnings, labor force participation, and the percentage of women in leadership and professional positions, it still ranks only 22nd based on the projected year it will close the wage gap between men and women – 2058, according to a recent report by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR).¹

It is documented that the inequity in wages is significantly greater in low-wage jobs, which are principally held by women from minority communities, which then translates into less family income and more poverty in families with women working in these jobs.

These bills include components that require an increased level of transparency (a well-documented interest of the League). Among these components are inclusion of the minimum rate of pay in job postings; the stipulation that a lesser pay rate than that posted for the position is unlawful; and that employees cannot be restricted or punished for discussing salary.

These requirements, along with the mandate that “no employer shall discriminate on the basis of gender **in any way**” related to wages for like or comparable work; requiring job evaluation plans; and restrictions on potential employers regarding asking for an applicant’s salary history will go a long way to free women in the Massachusetts workforce from actual or perceived wage discrimination practices.

The League of Women Voters strongly urges the members of this Committee to vote to support this legislation and work to have it implemented in the current session.

Thank you for your consideration.

¹ <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/the-gender-wage-gap-2014-earnings-differences-by-race-and-ethnicity>