

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1696

As Reported by House Committee On:
Labor & Workplace Standards

Title: An act relating to wage and salary information.

Brief Description: Concerning wage and salary information.

Sponsors: Representatives Dolan, Senn, Davis, Macri, Robinson, Jinkins, Kilduff, Wylie, Frame, Appleton, Ortiz-Self, Stanford, Goodman, Chapman, Peterson, Doglio, Pollet, Leavitt, Valdez and Gregerson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Labor & Workplace Standards: 2/7/19, 2/12/19 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits an employer from seeking the wage or salary history of an applicant or requiring that the wage or salary history meet certain criteria, with some exceptions.
- Requires an employer to provide the wage scale or salary range for the job title to an employee both upon hire and annually, upon request.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKPLACE STANDARDS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Sells, Chair; Chapman, Vice Chair; Gregerson and Ormsby.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Mosbrucker, Ranking Minority Member; Hoff.

Staff: Jenny Aronson (786-7290) and Joan Elgee (786-7106).

Background:

It is legal under current law for an employer to request an applicant's wage or salary history. The wage scales or salary ranges of public employees are generally made public; however

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private employers are not required to provide wage scales or salary ranges to applicants for employment.

The Equal Pay Opportunity Act (Act) prohibits an employer from discriminating based on gender in providing compensation between similarly employed employees. The Act further provides that if an employee receives less compensation on the basis of gender, the employee may sue and recover the difference of the compensation he or she should have received. An individual's previous wage or salary history is not a defense.

In a recent Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals (Court) case, the Court held that prior salary may not be considered in setting a person's pay under the federal Equal Pay Act.

Summary of Bill:

An employer may not seek the wage or salary history of an applicant or require that the applicant's prior wage or salary history meet certain criteria, with some exceptions. A prospective employer may confirm an applicant's wage or salary history if the applicant has voluntarily disclosed the applicant's wage or salary history, or after an offer of employment with compensation has been negotiated and made to the applicant.

An employer must provide to the applicant the wage scale or salary range for the job title upon request. An employer must also provide this information to the employee annually, upon request. These disclosure requirements are satisfied if the wage scale or salary range for a position is available on the employer's website.

Administrative remedies and a private cause are available. The Director of the Department of Labor and Industries must investigate employee-initiated complaints and may order the employer to pay to the employee actual damages; statutory damages equal to the actual damages of \$5,000, whichever is greater; and including interest. The Director may also impose a civil penalty of no more than \$200 for a first violation and no more than \$1,000 for a repeat violation, payment of the costs of investigation and enforcement, and any other appropriate relief. An employee who prevails on appeal is entitled to costs and attorneys' fees. Any wages and interest owed must be calculated from the first date wages were owed. Judicial remedies are similar, and the court may also order reinstatement and injunctive relief. A collections process is also provided for.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Washington women have experienced wage discrimination for decades and the gap is even wider for women of color. The use of salary history in the hiring process is a seemingly neutral practice that perpetuates inequality between genders and races. The practice assumes that salaries were fairly established at prior jobs, but data shows that they are not.

This bill builds upon last year's Equal Pay Opportunity Act. Many women in Washington have personal stories about how their salary histories were used to justify paying them less than their male counterparts for comparable work. Washington would follow many states, local governments, and private companies in ending the use of applicants' prior salary histories in the hiring process. This bill can help us get closer to equal pay for equal work.

(Opposed) The concern with the bill is publishing salary ranges. For industries such as law firms and the technology sector, potential recruits' knowledge of salary ranges may create a competitive disadvantage. The provision allowing for use of salary history when volunteered is helpful. The penalty and attorney's fees provisions are problematic. The gender pay gap is real, and business organizations welcome the opportunity to find workable ways to improve pay equity.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Dolan, prime sponsor; Andrew Kashyap, Legal Voice; Marilyn Watkins, Economic Opportunity Institute; and Maggie Humphries, Mom's Rising.

(Opposed) Bob Battles, Association of Washington Business.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.