

Questions for the Record

Khara Jabola-Carolus, Executive Director, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women
Dr. C. Nicole Mason, President and Chief Executive Officer, Institute for Women's Policy Research

March 24th 2021, Hearing: "Honoring Equal Pay Day"

Questions from Rep. Robin L. Kelly

Please provide responses to the following:

Today we observe Equal Pay Day—a day that marks how far into this year women must work just to earn what their male colleagues made last year.

Overall, women earn just 82 cents for every dollar men earn. And the disparity is even more pronounced for women of color.

Black women earn just 63 cents for every dollar made by their non-Hispanic White male counterparts.

Native American women earn even less—60 cents to the dollar. And Latinx women just 55 cents per dollar earned by a White male.

Dr. Mason, let me start by asking you—

Q: What accounts for these stark disparities?

Ms. Jabola-Carolus [Ha-BOH-la – KAR-oh-liss], let me turn to you.

While Asian and Pacific Islander women overall earn 85 cents to the dollar, the A-A-P-I community is diverse, women's experiences vary widely.

For example, Native Hawaiian and Vietnamese women earn just 63 cents for every dollar earned by a White man, and Burmese and Nepali women even less.

Q: What systemic factors account for these differences?

Thank you.

On its face, cents on the dollar might not seem like much, but over a lifetime it amounts to a devastatingly large sum.

Each year, Black, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander women make an average of \$24,000 less than their White male counterparts.

Native American women make an average of \$24,650 less. And Latina women make an average of \$29,000 less than White men annually.

This amounts to a lifetime earnings deficit of anywhere from \$960,000 to almost \$1.2 million dollars for women of color.

That is a staggering difference, and in many cases, enough to push women below the federal poverty line for the exact same work that keeps their White male colleagues above it.

Q: Dr. Mason, is it fair to say that women of color face a dual wage gap based on the intersection of race and gender?

Eliminating the dual wage gap will take considerable work.

According to data from the National Women's Law Center, the wage gap for Black women narrowed by just 19 cents in the 50 years between 1967 and 2018.

And today, Black women are still paid 19 cents less than the average of women of all races. We cannot wait another 50 years to fix that.

Women of color simply deserve better.