

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

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MEMORANDUM

March 17, 2021

To: Committee Members

Fr: Majority Staff

Re: Hearing on “Honoring ‘Equal Pay Day’: Examining the Long-Term Economic Impacts of Gender Inequality”

On **Wednesday, March 24, 2021, at 10:00 a.m., in room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building and over WebEx**, the Committee will hold a hearing in honor of Equal Pay Day to examine the economic harm caused by longstanding gender inequalities, which has been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, particularly for women of color. The hearing will review reforms to promote an equitable and inclusive economic recovery for women across the United States.

I. BACKGROUND

Historically, systemic inequities have prevented economic equality between genders in the United States. Prior to the pandemic, women bore a disproportionate burden of care work, held a majority of low-wage jobs, and were more likely than men to be forced out of employment.¹ The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated these persistent inequities.² Factors including the gender wage gap make women less likely to earn as much as their male counterparts, and as a result they are being forced out of the workplace—in many cases permanently.³

¹ National Partnership for Women and Families, *The Female Face of Caregiving* (Nov. 2018) (online at www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/female-face-family-caregiving.pdf); National Women’s Law Center, *Underpaid & Overloaded: Women in Low-Wage Jobs* (2014) (online at www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/final_nwlc_lowwagereport2014.pdf); *What the Increase in Quit Rates During a Recession Means for Women—And How to Counteract It*, Ms. Magazine (Sept. 30, 2020) (online at www.ms magazine.com/2020/09/30/what-the-increase-in-quit-rates-during-a-recession-means-for-women-and-how-to-counteract-it/).

² Brookings Institution, *Why Has COVID-19 Been Especially Harmful for Working Women?* (Oct. 2020) (online at www.brookings.edu/essay/why-has-covid-19-been-especially-harmful-for-working-women/).

³ *Workers Face Permanent Job Losses as the Virus Persists*, New York Times (Oct. 3, 2020) (online at www.nytimes.com/2020/10/03/business/economy/coronavirus-permanent-job-losses.html).

Since February 2020, women have experienced a net loss of more than 5.4 million jobs—55% of the United States’ overall net job loss since the start of the coronavirus crisis.⁴ According to one analysis, mothers leaving the labor force or reducing hours to assume care work responsibilities during the coronavirus pandemic are projected to lose \$64.5 billion in wages annually.⁵

Women of color have borne the brunt of the pandemic’s impact, as they have experienced its compounded harms on both women and on communities of color. These harms aggravate longstanding economic discrimination and other barriers to economic equality. For example, women of color have been and continue to be disproportionately harmed by the gender wage gap. Black women are paid only 63 cents for every dollar paid to white men, and Latinas are paid only 55 cents for every dollar paid to white men.

To illustrate how the gender wage gap suppresses women’s earnings, “Equal Pay Days” mark the points during the year when different communities of women would achieve the same pay that white men received for doing equivalent work during the preceding year. Equal Pay Days for women of color are later in the year because of the disproportionate impact of the gender wage gap on women of color in the United States. Whereas All Women’s Equal Pay Day is on March 24, 2021, Black Women’s Equal Pay Day is on August 3, Native Women’s Equal Pay Day is on September 8, and Latina Women’s Equal Pay Day is not until October 21.⁶ Households of color are also more likely to be multigenerational, suggesting that women of color are more likely to take on elder and child care responsibilities, and have been more likely to do so during the coronavirus pandemic.⁷

II. HEARING PURPOSE

The purpose of the hearing is to examine longstanding economic inequalities and the disproportionate harm the coronavirus pandemic has inflicted upon women in the United States—particularly women of color. As part of this hearing, the Committee will evaluate how enacting comprehensive feminist reforms—such as the Paycheck Fairness Act, the Child Care for Working Families Act, the Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act and other vital measures—would help to ensure full economic inclusion and equity for women as part of the country’s recovery from the coronavirus crisis.⁸

⁴ National Women’s Law Center, *All of the Jobs Lost in December Were Women’s Jobs* (Jan. 2021) (online at www.nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/December-Jobs-Day.pdf).

⁵ Center for American Progress, *How COVID-19 Sent Women’s Workforce Progress Backward* (Oct. 30, 2020) (online at www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2020/10/30/492582/covid-19-sent-womens-workforce-progress-backward/).

⁶ American Association of University Women, *Equal Pay Day Calendar* (online at www.aauw.org/resources/article/equal-pay-day-calendar/) (accessed Mar. 16, 2021).

⁷ National Partnership for Women and Families, *The Female Face of Caregiving* (Nov. 2018) (online at www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/female-face-family-caregiving.pdf).

⁸ H.R. 7; H.R. 1364, 116th Cong. (2019); H.R. 804; H.R. 1065; H.R. 1620.

III. WITNESSES

Megan Rapinoe

U.S. Women's National Team and Equal Pay Advocate

Ai-jen Poo

Executive Director

National Domestic Workers Alliance

Dr. C. Nicole Mason

President and Chief Executive Officer

Institute for Women's Policy Research

Khara Jabola-Carolus

Executive Director

Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women

Additional witnesses to be announced.

Staff contacts: Kate Kelly, Christina Parisi, Miles Lichtman, and Katie Teleky at (202) 225-5051.