



Good morning, my name is C. Nicole Mason and I am the President of the Institute for Women's Policy Research, a think focused on winning economic equity for all women, and building women's power and influence in society.

I thank you for the invitation to testify today and ask that my written testimony and IWPR's Building the Future: Bold Policies for a Gender Equitable Recovery be submitted for the record.

My first job at the age of 12 was selling newspapers door to door in my neighborhood. By 16, I was working in a food court. In college, I worked as a waitress and by 20, I had landed my first professional job at a local nonprofit organization. I have participated in the workforce and earned a steady paycheck for nearly my entire life. I worked out of necessity and for survival, which is true for many women in the workforce.

Across the board, [women earn less than men in nearly every occupation](#) for which there is available data. If we do nothing, [women will not reach economic parity with men until 2059](#). For women of color, it will take more than a century: 2130 for black women and 2224 for Hispanic women. This means women will have to work longer or hold multiple jobs to make ends meet and to care for their families. It also means that if we do nothing, my daughter and my daughter's daughter will not see pay equity in their lifetimes.

Pay inequity and lost earnings due to the wage gap have dire consequences for women. It is estimated that women lose approximately \$1 million over their career due to the gender wage gap. For women of color, the loss is significantly higher.

During economic downturns and recessions, such as the one we find ourselves in now, lost earnings due to the pay gap make women economically vulnerable and cause additional financial hardship because they have fewer savings to cover emergencies or basic expenses when there is an unexpected loss of income or employment.

Raising the wages of women to match those of comparable men would have a dramatic impact on their families. The poverty rate for all working women would be cut in half, falling from 8.0 percent to 3.8 percent. The very high poverty rate for working single mothers would fall by nearly half, from 28.9 percent to 14.5 percent.

The gender wage gap is real. It is not a hoax or the result of women's individual choices. It is the result of the systematic undervaluing of women's contributions, skills, and talents to the workforce and society.

We can and should do better. This is moment of public reckoning and revelation that would not have been possible a year ago. I hope we can use it to propel us to re-imagine a society, including our workplaces and homes, that is more supportive of working women and their families.