

RCW 49.58.005 Findings—Intent. (1) The legislature finds that despite existing equal pay laws, there continues to be a gap in wages and advancement opportunities among workers in Washington, especially women. Income disparities limit the ability of women to provide for their families, leading to higher rates of poverty among women and children. The legislature finds that in order to promote fairness among workers, employees must be compensated equitably. Further, policies that encourage retaliation or discipline towards workers who discuss or inquire about compensation prevent workers from moving forward.

(2) The legislature intends to update the existing Washington state equal pay act, not modified since 1943, to address income disparities, employer discrimination, and retaliation practices, and to reflect the equal status of all workers in Washington state.

(3) The legislature finds that:

(a) The long-held business practice of inquiring about salary history has contributed to persistent earning inequalities;

(b) Historically, women have been offered lower initial pay than men for the same jobs even where their levels of education and experience are the same or comparable; and

(c) Lower starting salaries translate into lower pay, less family income, and more children and families in poverty.

(4) The legislature therefore intends to follow multiple other states and take the additional step towards gender equality by prohibiting an employer from seeking the wage or salary history of an applicant for employment in certain circumstances. Further, the legislature intends to require an employer to provide wage and salary information to applicants and employees. [2019 c 345 § 1; 2018 c 116 § 1.]

Short title—2019 c 345: "This chapter may be known and cited as the Washington equal pay and opportunities act." [2019 c 345 § 5.]