



TESTIMONY RE: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION  
BEFORE THE SENATE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE  
AISHWARYA SINHA  
PREVENTION SPECIALIST  
PENNSYLVANIA COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
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Good morning, thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak with you today about pay equity and intimate violence prevention. I am Aishwarya Sinha. I am the Prevention Specialist at the Pennsylvania Coalition against Domestic Violence. PCADV is a state-level coalition for domestic violence survivors in Pennsylvania. I have been with the organization for five years and my work encompasses domestic violence prevention through the lens of pay equity and community engagement. During my work at PCADV, I have curated information on connections between comparable worth, risk factors for domestic violence, and prevention. I used my research to author a report on the impact of pay inequity and how that increases a woman's exposure to known risk factors for domestic violence. Since publishing this report, it has been shared with PCADV's member organizations, on our website, and with every American Association of University Women (AAUW) chapter in the United States. In 2022, PCADV received the Gateway to Equity Award from AAUW PA for PCADV's work and attention to pay equity.

Today, I am here to talk about the importance of equal pay in preventing domestic violence.

Pay equity—or more simply, equal pay for equal work-- is vital for survivor safety and economic autonomy. In 2018, PCADV was one of the ten state coalitions that received the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement and Leadership Through Alliances (DELTA)



funding. Our goal was to understand how unequal pay is connected to, and impacts, domestic violence. And how pay equity can prevent someone from experiencing known risk factors for domestic violence. Since then, we have been working consistently to raise awareness of the gender wage gap and demonstrate the negative financial and health impacts it can have on women and their families. PCADV has also begun operationalizing pay equity principles in our own organization.

When a woman is paid less than their peers, regardless of gender, it will impact their ability to survive or thrive survive in the same environment and communities, with the same and often greater economic burdens and responsibilities. This wagw gap is further widened for women of color who have to face the additional discrimination of racism, bringing about further social and financial hindrance. Black women earn 63 cents and Latinas only earn 54 cents for every dollar paid to a white man. It will take more than 40 years for women and almost 100 years for women of color to see pay equity. That is an incredible amount of life-sustaining economic resources lost based solely on someone's gender and race. If the wage gap were closed, women who work full-time would be able to afford 13 more months of childcare, 7-10 more months of mortgage or rent, and nearly a year's worth of food.

Unequal pay perpetuates poverty, housing insecurity, and harmful gender norms – all of which are well-researched and documented risk factors for experiencing domestic violence. Meaning, pay inequity puts individuals at a greater risk of experiencing domestic violence. Additionally, having little to no access to funds and economic resources and security can make it nearly impossible for survivors to leave abusive relationships and heal.



Pay equity can be achieved in multiple ways and is beneficial for the economy. If pay equity is achieved, half of the women working full-time in the U.S. would be raised out of poverty. In Pennsylvania, the current poverty rate for employed women would decrease from 12.1% to 6%. Thousands of people would no longer experience poverty and its related negative impacts on families and local communities.

One way to achieve pay equity that we want to talk about today is paying employees a living, and thriving, wage. A living wage helps individuals afford the necessities of life – a thriving wage allows someone to move beyond living paycheck-to-paycheck and provides for savings, travel, and hobbies. A thriving wage lifts women and families out of poverty and increases their safety, autonomy, and economic power. It provides for basic needs and an economic foundation to save and grow their wealth for their family's future.

Because of budget deficits, domestic violence advocates in Pennsylvania are not even making a living wage. Last year, PCADV programs had 431 advocates vacate their positions and were only able to fill 86% of those vacancies. Every domestic violence program in Pennsylvania is understaffed, with an average of 7 vacancies per program in a single year. In 2022 there were 3,209 unmet requests for services.

We need a budget that allows programs to offer thriving, equitable, and competitive salaries to recruit and retain skilled advocates, so that we may serve survivors. We cannot continue to ask advocates to struggle economically when we know that to be a risk factor for domestic violence. We cannot continue to pour from an empty cup.