



**Testimony Before the
NYC Council Committee on Women's Issues
April 24, 2017
By Beverly Neufeld, President of PowHer New York**

I am Beverly Neufeld, President of PowHer New York (PowHerNY), a statewide network of over 100 organizations working together to accelerate economic equality for New York's women. Thank you for the opportunity to express our strong support to the New York City Council for Int. 1500, Int. 1512, Int. 1520, and Resolution 542 which address gender and racial inequity.

PowHerNY leads an ongoing, decade long campaign for stronger policies to end gender wage and opportunity discrimination. Legislation is a critical means to accomplishing a more level playing field. That is why some of PowHerNY's efforts have been directed to passage of key equalizing laws in New York State including the Women's Equality Act, the Equal Pay Act, Paid Leave law, and pro-choice and anti-violence laws. In New York City, we have similarly worked, most recently in support of the salary history ban.

Policy reform promoting wage transparency, accommodating pregnant workers, addressing sexual harassment, expanding family friendly benefits, for example, have all made the workplace better for employees, especially women. While New York has been a model of effective, progressive leadership for the nation, we are all well aware that more must be done. The bills being discussed today are all critical next steps toward economic equity for women and people of color in New York City.

Despite laws prohibiting gender wage discrimination in 1964, women continue to earn less than men. Federally, the gender earnings ratio for full-time, year-round workers reported in April 2017 is 80 percent. The gap is even greater for African-American women who earn 63 percent of what white men earn and Hispanic women earn 54 percent of what white men earn. In New York, the overall disparity is one of the smallest at 89 percent, but 66 percent for African-American women and 56 percent for Hispanic women. Considering New York's relative success closing the wage gap, we are especially failing these groups because New York has the second largest population of women of color.

The recent report by Public Advocate highlights the challenges for New York City women who lose 5.8 billion dollars annually to the wage gap. Here, women of color experience even higher wage disparity of over 8 percentage points. For Latinas, that means an average loss of income of over one million dollars over a 40 year career. Not surprisingly, Latinas in NYC have a poverty rate of 27 percent, compared to women's overall rate of 15.7 percent.

Interventions to close the wage gap are critical to economic security for women, their families, and our city. In that there is no one cause of the wage inequity between women and men, employers who want to address the gap must employ a variety of approaches. True pay equity requires a change in culture in hiring and advancement practices, as well as a willingness to address unconscious bias that may exist throughout the workplace.

Of paramount importance is for the employer, whether in municipal government or the private sector, making a public commitment to gender equity as a core principle and chart a course to accomplish that goal. The work must be led from the top, reach every level of employment, and be sustained and evaluated over time. That is exactly what today's bills will accomplish in these following ways:

On the macro level, [Resolution 542](#) by Council Members Cumbo, Johnson and Ferreras-Copeland which calls upon the United States Senate to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) would set a framework and goal of gender equity at the highest level of government. PowHerNY supports the Council in taking a leading role to push our federal government with this resolution. As well, we urge the Council to adopt CEDAW and be part of the Cities for CEDAW movement.

We also applaud the intentions of [Int. 1520](#) by Council Member Lander which would institutionalize the core value of equity in the New York City Charter. By measuring gender and racial inequality annually, creating budgetary responses, and charging each level of city government with finding solutions, NYC will make strides at reducing inequity and being a model for the nation.

As an employer, NYC can have enormous impact on its workforce and on other employers doing business here. [Int. 1500](#) by The Speaker (Council Member Mark-Viverito) and Council Members Cumbo and Johnson, which calls for gender and racial equity assessments for municipal employees, will provide the data needed to ascertain where disparities exist. Measuring, benchmarking and evaluating are critical steps without which NYC as an employer cannot address problems and spotlight successes. As a model, the City will inspire and provide motivation for other businesses to follow, as well as offer best practices.

Assessment is essential, but evidence of yawning gaps already exists, begging for immediate response. The Mayor and City Council acted by instituting a ban on salary history in hiring, first for municipal workers and this month extending that to the private sector. [Int 1512](#) by Council Member Dromm and The Speaker (Council Member Mark-Viverito) would similarly stop persistent wage discrimination by providing training for city agencies to promote gender and racial equity. Unconscious or implicit bias leads to unintentionally judging the skills and capacity of an employee based on the employee's gender, race, or other attributes. The results are manifold including lower pay, lack of advancement, and exclusion from non-traditional jobs. All result in economic inequities which have ongoing and lasting economic, emotional and professional implications for workers and their families.

For all these reasons, PowHerNY urges the New York City Council to swiftly forward these legislative interventions which will help close the wage and opportunity gaps for our citizens. As well, you will send a message to other cities, states and even the federal government, that actions are the best resistance to the current assaults on our hard won progress, our citizens, and our values.

Thank you.

Powher New York Network

50/50 in 2020 Coalition	MomsRising	ROC New York
9-5 Nat'l Association of Working Women	Nation to Nation Networking	ROC United
A Better Balance	National Association of Female Executives	Take the Lead
AAUW-NYS	National Council of Jewish Women- Lakeville	The Transition Network
Asian Women in Business	National Council of Jewish Women-NY	UN Women Metro NYC Chapter
Atlas DIY	National Domestic Workers Alliance	WNY Women's Foundation
Bella Abzug Leadership Institute	National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs-NYC	Women in Arts & Media Coalition
Catalyst Inc	National Institute for Reproductive Health	Women in Development- NYC
CCI-Center for Children's Initiatives	National Organization of Italian Women	Women in Health Management
Center for Popular Democracy	National Partnership for Women and Families	Women, Chefs & Restaurateurs
Center for the Women of NY	National Women's Law Center	Women's Center for Career Education and Advancement
Centro Civico Cultural Dominicano	New York City Collaboration for Construction Women	Women's City Club of New York
Change Create Transform	New York City Women's March	Women's Fund of Long Island
Chhaya CDC	New York Civil Liberties Union	Women's Organizing Network
Citizen Action of New York	New York Coalition of 100 Black Women	Women's Media Center
Citizen's Committee for Children of NY	New York Immigrant Coalition	Works-In Progress
Community Service Society	New York Paid Leave Coalition	YWCA of New York
CWA Local 1180	New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence	YWCA Binghamton
Equal Pay, Now!	New York State Coalition	YWCA Brooklyn
Family Values @ Work	Against Sexual Assault	YWCA City of New York
Girls for Gender Equity	New York State Pay Equity Coalition	YWCA Cortland
Hollaback!	New York Women in Communications	YWCA Elmira
Human Rights Project /Urban Justice Center	New York Women in Film and Television	YWCA Genesee County
Inclusion Strategies	New York Women's Agenda	YWCA Greater Capital Region
Institute For The Puerto Rican/Hispanic Elderly, Inc.	New York Women's Bar Association	YWCA Jamestown
International Code Council	New York Women's Chamber of Commerce	YWCA Mohawk Valley
Jewish Women's Foundation of NY	New York Women's Foundation	YWCA Niagara Frontier
Junior League-New York State Public Affairs Committee	Nontraditional Employment for Women	YWCA Northeastern NY
League of Professional Theatre Women	NOW Brooklyn-Queens	YWCA Orange County
League of Women Voters- NYC	NOW-NYC	YWCA Queens
League of Women Voters - NYS	NOW-NYS	YWCA Rochester
Lean In New York	NOW-Westchester	YWCA Syracuse
Legal Momentum	NY Union Child Care Coalition	YWCA Ulster
Levo League	NYC4CEDAW	YWCA Western New York
Make It Work	NYS Women, Inc.	YWCA Westfield
Millennial Ambition	Planned Parenthood NYC	YWCA White Plains
	Raising Women's Voices New York	YWCA Yonkers
		Zonta International Club of NY
		Zonta of Greater Queens