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SENATOR LINDA STEWART, HOUSE DEMOCRATIC LEADER JANET CRUZ AND REPRESENTATIVE LORI BERMAN PROPOSE BILL TO ELIMINATE THE GENDER PAY GAP

TALLAHASSEE — State Senator Linda Stewart (D-Orlando), House Democratic Leader Janet Cruz (D-Tampa) and Representative Lori Berman (D-Lantana) today filed [Senate Bill 410](#) and [House Bill 319](#), jointly named the Helen Gordon Davis Fair Pay Act, aimed at closing the gender pay gap in Florida.

The bills seek to close the pervasive gender pay gap by updating and clarifying Florida’s current law to ban employers from paying workers differently based on sex or gender identity. On average, women in Florida take home only 87 cents for every dollar earned by men.

“It is unconscionable that in America today women continue to be paid less for the same amount of work as men,” declared **House Democratic Leader Janet Cruz**. “Our nation was founded on the ideal that all of us are created equal and that ought to hold in all facets of our lives. Paying people fairly for the work they do shouldn’t depend on their gender, but rather on the quality of their work.”

Additionally, SB 410 and HB 319 delineates which reasons employers can use to pay employees differently – things like education, skill-set, and experience. By clarifying these reasons, employers can avoid costly litigation and be clear about which attributes are valued. Moreover, the bills would prohibit “mommy tracking,” ensuring that women (and men) are not forced into lower tracks of employment based on assumptions. It would bar employers from inquiring about or screening employees based on their prior salary history – a practice we know can introduce unintended discrimination into the hiring process. It would also increase civil penalties for a violation, thus motivating employers to do the right thing.

“I’m honored to be a part of this fight. Reducing an entire group of Floridians take home pay not only hurts their families, but it hurts Florida’s economy as a whole. Those groups most affected by this – the single mother; a family stricken by illness or unemployment or tragedy that relies on a female breadwinner; those Floridians whose gender identity isn’t even recognized anywhere in our state laws; they deserve policies and protections that reflect the reality of their everyday existence. That’s why we need this bill. That’s why we were elected to serve,” proclaimed **Senator Linda Stewart.**

Efforts to close the gender pay gap are both popular and necessary. Despite having federal legislation on the books since 1963, the gender wage gap persists. According to the The American Association of University Women (AAUW) of Florida, over a lifetime of work (47 years), the total estimated loss of earnings of women compared with men is \$700,000 for a high school graduate, \$1.2 million for a college graduate and \$2 million for a professional school graduate.

“I am proud and honored to file this legislation along with Senator Stewart and Democratic Leader Cruz. Leader Cruz has championed this bill for 5 years and I have always supported her efforts. While I feel this legislation should be unnecessary, the reality is that in 2017 women are still not earning the same pay as men in the same position. Paying women equally is good for the economy and good for business. It is simply a no-brainer and I invite my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to write this into statute once and for all,” said **Representative Lori Berman.**

On Tuesday, January 24th, 2017 at 11:30am in front of the Senate Chambers, all three Members will be hosting a press conference announcing this legislation. They invite their colleagues to join them.

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