



## Mississippi Women's Economic Security Initiative Coalition

Honorable Mississippi Legislators,

Our coalition is writing this open letter to tell you “All we want for Christmas is Mississippi women’s economic security”. We, specifically, ask that you give us the gift of passing an Equal Pay Law that protects the women of Mississippi, and which improves the economy of our great state.

The Mississippi Women’s Economic Security Initiative Coalition is a collective of over 50 organizations with thousands of members from across the entire State of Mississippi. The Coalition is organized to promote policies to improve the economic wellbeing of Women and those supported by Women. We know that many Mississippians are struggling to survive. Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) households struggle to function in every county in Mississippi – urban, suburban, and rural – and they include people of all genders, ages, household types, and ethnicities for whom women in Mississippi bear the heaviest responsibility supporting their families.

Despite the fact that 49% of the state’s workforce are women,

- 83% of single female led households live below the poverty level;
- Women make up nearly two-thirds of workers being paid the minimum wage of only \$7.25/hr;
- More than 70 percent work in tipped jobs; and
- More than seven in 10 work in low wage jobs that typically pay \$11.50/hour or less.

Mississippi’s working women are “economically insecure”. Without equal pay protection, the women of our state face persistent poverty, and live under perpetual financial trauma. Without support, women are forced to balance the duress they face in unprotected jobs with the need to provide for the basic needs of a family including childcare, housing, healthcare, and transportation.

Mississippi’s women are economic drivers for their families and the broader Mississippi economy. Equal pay protection would benefit the whole of Mississippi. Passing an Equal Pay Law, \$4.15 billion dollars would add to Mississippi’s economy. Passage of a comprehensive equal pay law would benefit and protect both the employee and the employer. Equal pay protection is good for business.

In order for women to have an opportunity and pathway out of poverty and help the whole of Mississippi, the Mississippi Legislature must urgently address the significant pay disparities that remain critical for the economic security of women and their families.

Mississippi urgently needs to enact an equal pay law that ensures that all employees:

- Receive equal pay for equal work, without regard to their sex, race, national origin, or other protected characteristics, unless an employer shows a bona fide business justification for the pay difference;
- Are protected from retaliation for discussing their pay with co-workers;
- Aren't forced to provide their salary history when seeking a job, because pay discrimination follows individuals from job to job when employers rely on job applicants' salary history to set pay;
- Are able to recover compensatory and punitive damages and be fully compensated for the harm they experience from pay discrimination; and which
- Provides a safe harbor from damages for businesses that conduct a self-evaluation of their pay practices and are working towards closing gender and racial wage gaps.

Mississippi is the only state in the nation without an Equal Pay law. These laws work well and it's time for Mississippi to stop short changing its women!

We urge each of you to show your support for and protection of women by becoming cosponsors advocating for meaningful and positively impactful Equal Pay legislation. In doing so, you will demonstrate your commitment to the lives and wellbeing of women in our state.

Please let us know if you or your staff would like any additional information on this important legislation. The Mississippi Women's Economic Security Initiative Coalition looks forward to hearing from you soon. You may reach us through our partner organization, the Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable by emailing [mwesi@msbwr.org](mailto:mwesi@msbwr.org).

Respectfully,

The partner organizations of the Mississippi Women's Economic Security Initiative Coalition





**WOMEN'S  
FOUNDATION**  
OF MISSISSIPPI



**ACLU**  
AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION  
Mississippi



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Women**

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**JACKSON**  
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empowering women since 1881,



**NASW**  
National Association of Social Workers  
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