



COMMITTEE STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Fred Keller (R-PA), Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections Joint Hearing:
"Fighting for Fairness: Examining Legislation to Confront Workplace
Discrimination"
March 18, 2021**

(As prepared for delivery)

"Thank you, to both of our Chairwomen, Ranking Member Fulcher, and to all our witnesses for joining us today.

I'd first like to associate myself with the remarks made by Ranking Member Fulcher about the structure of the hearing unfolding here today. Only allowing the minority to invite one witness for a 'legislative' hearing covering four different bills is far from 'unifying' and will not result in a thorough, bipartisan examination of the important topics before us.

I'd like to comment specifically on one of the bills being discussed today, H.R. 7. Equal work deserves equal pay, regardless of the sex of the employee. In America, this is the law. Paying women less than men for equal work is wrong and illegal. Employers who continue to do so are wrong and they are breaking the law. No one here disagrees with that fact.

That's why Congress enacted the *Equal Pay Act of 1963*, which made it illegal to pay different wages to women for equal work. The following year, Congress enacted even broader nondiscrimination laws, making it illegal for employers to discriminate because of race, color, national origin, religion, and sex in Title VII of the *Civil Rights Act*.

These landmark laws are an important affirmation of who we are and what we believe as a country: that workplace discrimination is repugnant and illegal.

H.R. 7, the so-called *Paycheck Fairness Act*, is a false promise that creates opportunities and advantages for trial lawyers—not for working women. Instead of treating sex discrimination charges with the seriousness they deserve, the *‘Paycheck Fairness’ Act* is designed to make it easier for trial lawyers to bring more suits of questionable validity for the purpose of siphoning off unlimited paydays from settlements and jury awards, lining their own pockets and dragging women through tedious, never-ending legal turmoil.

The *‘Paycheck Fairness’ Act* offers no new or meaningful protections against pay discrimination. Rather, it dramatically limits the ability of employers to defend against claims of discrimination based on pay disparities that result from legitimate factors.

Just two months ago, the women’s labor force participation rate hit a 33-year low, the lowest it’s been since 1988. At a time when women are leaving the workforce in droves, largely due to COVID-19 and lengthy school closures, the last thing we should be doing is dragging working women through never-ending legal turmoil while making it easier for trial lawyers to score unlimited paydays.

All employees should be valued for their recognizable contributions to the American workforce and economy. Instead of working to line trial lawyers’ pockets, this Committee should be focused on policies that foster individual freedom, innovation, and pro-growth economic policies so all workers and job seekers have opportunities to achieve life-long success.”

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