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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF 19-H 5659 —
AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS
March 27, 2019**

The ACLU of Rhode Island applauds the work of the legislative sponsors and organizations that have put this legislation together to clarify and expand equal pay protections for women in our state.

According to the National Women's Law Center, "women in the U.S. who work full time, year round are paid only 78 cents for every dollar paid to their male counterparts. But the wage gap is even larger for many women of color working full time, year round, as black women are paid only 64 cents, and Latinas only 56 cents, for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men." In Rhode Island, these gaps are even more troubling as black women typically make 57 cents for every dollar and Latina women make an average of 48 cents for every dollar paid to white men.

Closing the wage gap is essential to the economic and social growth of our state, but particularly important for women of color, who are already more likely to have lower incomes and to be in poverty than virtually all other groups.

Last session, as many people know, this bill passed out of committee in an extremely weakened form that ended up *cutting back* on some equal pay protections in current law. The ACLU urges the Committee not to make the same mistake this year, but to instead pass the bill in its current form and truly help ensure equal pay for equal work.