

Testimony to House Labor and Industry Committee

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Thank you for holding this hearing today. My name is Diana Marques, and I am the Publication and Policy Analyst at PathWays PA.

For too long in Pennsylvania, job applicants have had no protection from questions about their marital or family status. While candidates cannot be asked about their race, handicaps, or age, it is still legal to ask if they are married, if they have children, and if they plan to have children. HB 2271 takes an important step forward in fixing this problem.

Currently, women make up half of our workforce, and 40% of all families rely on women as their primary breadwinner. Among these women are the nearly two-thirds of American women with pre-school age children that work. But in Pennsylvania, maternal and family profiling are keeping households from reaching their economic potential.

Pennsylvania is one of 28 states that still allows this profiling to occur. The results of these laws are clear:

- Despite equal resumes and work experiences, mothers are 79 percent less likely to be hired than non-mothers.
- In comparison to what men earn in comparable categories
 - Women without children earn 90%
 - Women with children earn 73%
 - Single mothers earn 60%

- When mothers are hired, they are offered \$11,000 less to start working than women who have the same resume and job experience but who are not mothers.¹

When women are discriminated against in the workplace, the problems don't end with them, or even with their families. If mothers can't get hired, or if they have to work for substandard wages, the entire economy suffers. Families lack the money to buy enough groceries, to get haircuts, or to go to the dry cleaners. In turn, local businesses lose customers and thereby lose the means of paying their own workforce. Our economy depends on hard work, but it also depends on workers earning their fair share in order to keep the economy going.

In reviewing this bill, we do ask that you look at the definition of maternal and familial profiling and consider expanding it to fit more family types. SB 1295, a similar bill, may be a good model to look at.

While it is important that employers ask questions to ensure they are hiring the best candidate for a position. It should be deeply troubling to the members of this committee, that employers have the ability, today, to ask such deeply personal questions about a potential employee. HB2271 is a pivotal first step into correcting this problem and following the lead of other states that have already adopted similar measures.

¹ <http://msmagazine.com/blog/2013/11/18/why-is-it-still-legal-to-profile-working-moms/>